

Environmental spy



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# FUTURE

JAN.  
1954

SCIENCE FICTION

25¢



**R JUPITER SAVE US**

by Ward Moore



ALL STORIES NEW

# Whee!

## FREE as a bird...

A "Quick-Action"  
OPPORTUNITY to

# WIN \$25,000 CASH PRIZES

1st Prize \$15,000

## The Amazing New EnterPRIZE PUZZLE CONTEST

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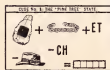
### HOW TO SOLVE SAMPLE PUZZLE

CLUE No. 1: THE "HOOSIER" STATE.



You will see there are a SINK, a DIAL, the SOLE of a shoe and various letters of the alphabet. There are two plus and two minus signs. It is necessary to add and subtract the names and letters as shown by the plus and minus signs. First, write down SINK. Then, add DIAL to it. Next, add ONEA. All this equals SINKDIALONEA. Now, you must subtract the letters in SOLE and K. When this is done you are left with INDIANA. Indiana is the Hoosier State, so the result checks with Clue No. 1.

Fun? Yes! Now Solve  
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Here's a quick-action puzzle contest that rings the bell. It's fair, it's square — and it offers the winners a golden opportunity to get a new slant on life! Just imagine — \$15,000 in nice crisp crudding \$100 bills! Well — YOU have the opportunity to win this kind of money but you must act now! Simply fill out the coupon below and mail. The very day we get your coupon we'll rush you full particulars on the amazing new EnterPRIZE "Quick-Action" Puzzle Contest. Here's the golden opportunity you've been waiting for! Grab it!

FUN TO ENTER! FUN TO DO!

No Gimmicks! Only Skill Counts!

The EnterPRIZE "Quick-Action" PUZZLE CONTEST is the contest every puzzle-minded person in the country has been waiting for. This contest is sponsored by the National Book Club to introduce its publications to as many new friends as possible. Just look at the SAMPLE

PUZZLE at the left. Here is a typical puzzle with every picture waiting to be identified. Everything open and above board — nothing tricky. That's one big reason you'll agree this is among the fairest, squarest contests ever offered to American puzzle fans.

FAIR AND SQUARE — ONLY STANDARD PICTURES  
USED IN AN AMAZING NEW CONCEPT IN PUZZLES

To make the contest fair and square for one and all, the Judges and Sponsor of the EnterPRIZE PUZZLE CONTEST have decided to base their picture illustrations only from READILY AVAILABLE AND OBTAINABLE SOURCES.

AND MORE! Every solution to every puzzle has a point value according to an error-proof table of letter values. You will know AT ONCE if your answer is right or wrong.

WIN REAL MONEY!

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## Big Bonus for promptness



Mail this coupon at once and learn how you can qualify to win a special extra promptness bonus of either a 1954 Riviera Buick or a beautiful Ranch Mink Coat. The choice is up to you if you win.

OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS—MAIL COUPON TODAY

ENTERPRIZE PUZZLE CONTEST  
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I want full particulars about the \$25,000.00 ENTERPRIZE PUZZLE CONTEST. Please mail me FREE the Official Entry Form, Rules, and First Series of Puzzles.

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134

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City \_\_\_\_\_ Zone \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Working Hours \_\_\_\_\_ A.M. to \_\_\_\_\_ P.M.

Occupation \_\_\_\_\_

Special tuition rates to members of the U. S. Armed Forces. Canadian residents send coupon to International Correspondence Schools Canadian, Ltd., Montreal, Canada.

# FUTURE

## SCIENCE FICTION

Volume 4  
Number 5  
January  
1954

Robert W. Lowndes

Editor

### Novella

- Rx JUPITER SAVE US** ..... Ward Moore 10  
The only choice seemed to be between tyranny and deadly chaos . . .

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Their lives depended on this creature's having just a little intelligence.
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A report on how your letters and coupons rated our last issue.
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We love letters, but we want your votes; if you don't feel like writing detailed comment, just fill out this coupon.

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Interior Illustrations by Luros, Murphy, and Orban

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VETERANS  
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## A GOOD PAY JOB

NRI Courses lead to these and many other jobs: Radio and TV service, P.A., Auto Radio, Lab, Factory, and Electronic Controls Technicians, Radio and TV Broadcasting, Police, Ship and Airway Operators and Technicians. Opportunities are increasing. The United States has over 115 million Radios—over 3000 Broadcasting Stations—more expansion is on the way.

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TV now reaches from coast-to-coast. 25 million homes now have Television sets; thousands more are being sold every week. About 200 TV stations are now on the air. Hundreds of others are being built. This means more jobs, good pay jobs with bright futures. More TV operators, installation, service technicians will be needed. Now is the time to get ready for success in TV.

## You Practice Broadcasting with Equipment I Send



As part of my Communications Course I send you kits of parts to build the low-power Broadcasting Transmitter shown at left. You use it to get practical experience putting a station "on the air," perform procedures demanded of broadcasting station operators. An FCC Commercial Operator's License can be your ticket to a better job and a bright future. My Course gives the training you need to get your license.

## You Practice Servicing with Equipment I Send

Nothing takes the place of PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE. That's why NRI training is based on LEARNING BY DOING. With my Servicing Course you build the modern Radio shown at right, a Multitester which you use to help fix sets while training. Many students make \$10, \$15 a week extra fixing neighbors' sets in spare time soon after enrolling. My book shows other equipment you get and keep.



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J. E. SMITH, President, National Radio Institute,  
Dept. 447 Washington 9, D. C. OUR 40TH YEAR.

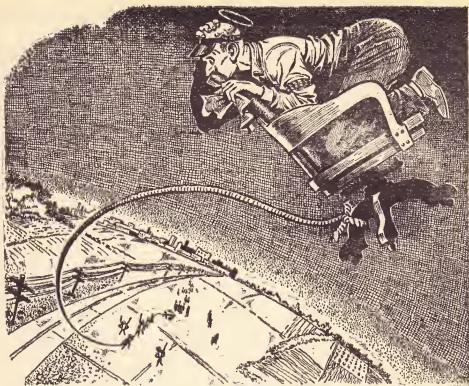
## Good for Both—FREE

MR. J. E. SMITH, President, Dept. 447  
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Mail me Sample Lesson and 64-page Book, FREE.  
(No salesman will call. Please write plainly.)

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ Zone \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_  
VETS - write in dose of discharge \_\_\_\_\_







# Down To Earth

A Department of Letters and Comment

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**L**ET'S FACE it; as this editorial is being typed, it is September 2, 1953, and we're still caught up in a record heat wave. My air-conditioner grunts like a tv wrestler, and all in all, the weather's far too inclement for deep thought. Sooo, now's the time for reminiscence, seeing as how a number of readers have asked.

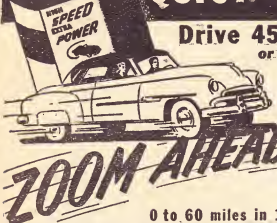
I remember looking through 1926 issues of *Amazing Stories* when they first appeared on sale, particularly the July 1926 issue whereon the cover displayed a bunch of sailors grouped around an anti-aircraft gun, trying to sight same at a monster fly that was swooping down upon them. That was the painting of Frank R. Paul, of

course; he did all the science fiction covers from April 1926 to June 1929 without a break. I also recall looking through the issues, in 1928, which contained a serial entitled, "The Skylark of Space".

Then, one happy day, while looking through some copies of a boy's magazine at the public library, I came across an advertisement for *Amazing Stories*, which same ad included a coupon; you filled it out, sent it in, and received a free sample copy. This is how I obtained the November 1928 issue, which opened up with a solid thriller entitled "The World At Bay" by B. and Geo. C. Wallis, and also

[Turn To Page 8]

# This new manual shows you how to get HIGH SPEED & EXTRA POWER with any car



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**1 GAL GAS!**

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**AFTER**

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reveals how to



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**WITHOUT OIL CHANGE**

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Town.....State.....

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contained "The Psychophonic Nurse" by David H. Keller.

The problem was: how to get the next issue, containing the conclusion of the serial? I checked newsstands and found that it was due out in a week. There followed a desperate drive to raise twenty-five cents; no luck. Then, the idea: I went back to the library and checked through other issues of this same boy's magazine that had run the ad; success—it appeared in other issues, too. With true socialistic disregard for public property, I excised this ad also and gave it to a trusted friend who lived across the street. Shortly afterwards, he received the December 1928 issue of *Amazing Stories*, which featured "The Metal Man", Jack Williamson's first-published story, glowingly illustrated on the cover. (I've recently obtained these old copies, and those covers still look awfully good.)

There were, alas, no more coupons to be found; some miscreant, in shocking contempt for the care of library copies of magazines, had torn out the last coupon—anyway, there was no one else I could trust to obtain a free copy and pass it on to me. How I managed to accumulate twenty-five cents for the January 1929 issue, featuring part one of "The Sixth Glacier". I recall not; suffice to say that it was done, the issue read—then came doom. The Law at home decreed: no more *Amazing Stories*. (It was ten years before I managed to get a copy of the following issue, and finish that serial.)

Was I downhearted, defeated, crushed? Yes. But recalling the bravery of John Paul Jones, George Washington, and other heroes held up to me for emulation, I bided my time and tried again, at the end of 1929. This time, The Law relaxed and permitted me to subscribe to *Science Wonder Stories*, which was advertised in radio magazines around the house. After all, I argued, this wasn't like

*Amazing Stories*; this was scientific. Lo, the barrier was broken, and it was truly amazing how many magazines that one lone subscription covered, for I managed to sneak in *Air Wonder Stories*, *Amazing Stories*, and the two quarterlies and pass them off as part of it. (Later, I found that The Law probably had not been deceived; it had been decided that, since I was approaching the dangerous age, this reading-matter might assist in keeping my mind off s-x.)

So I really started reading science-fiction in 1930, and within a week I was trying to scribble a story.

THE BIG names of that period were David H. Keller, Jack Williamson, A. Hyatt Verrill, E. E. Smith, Harl Vincent, Capt. S. P. Meek, Irving Lester & Fletcher Pratt, Nat Schachner & Arthur L. Zagat, R. H. Romans, Otto Willi Gail, G. Peyton Wertenbaker, Henrik Dahl Juve, Leslie F. Stone, R. F. Starzl, Stanton A. Coblentz, John Taine, and Walter Kateley. Letter-writers spoke in awed tones of the oldtime masters: Garrett P. Serviss, Ray Cummings, A. Merritt, Homer Eon Flint, Austin Hall, George Allen England, Ralph Milne Farley and Otis A. Kline—in addition to Verne, Wells, and Burroughs. Already, some were speaking of the "good old days".

Who were the letter-writers of the early '30s? Well, while I recall Darrow and Ackerman, I was more taken by the various argufyers, both professional and fan. John W. Campbell Jr. was battling with E. E. Smith; Victor A. Endersby took exception to some items in Harl Vincent's stories; various readers jumped on Dr. Keller's twenty-foot ants in "The Human Termites"; there were squabbles over evolution versus the bible; and William S. Sykora, among others, tried to show that time-travel was a flat impossibility.

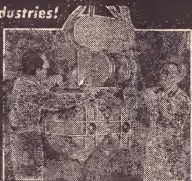
[Turn To Page 85]

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Green Ed-jo leaped for Will-jim, as the bear started climbing.

It was a strange world, where absolutism reigned without violence, and rebels were sure that — once their strength became known — the rulers would abdicate power gracefully. But Green Ed-jo, Jovian freak, knew differently — and saw little desirability between the tyranny of the Plotbureau and the chaos of the Readers.



**R**

# JUPITER SAVE US

Novella of Centuries to Come

by Ward Moore

(illustrated by Paul Orban)

**T**HE SUPE in the Immigration Service—an arm designed, as the name implies, to prevent immigration—and Green Ed-jo, aged seven, stepped out of the official 'copter onto the roof of the Beaural Building in Lank. Two proles, like themselves dressed in thermo-suits for out-

door wear, emerged from a stairwell and guided the 'copter to a parking ramp. Ed-jo followed the supe down an escalator to the floor below, passing patrolling proles who, like all guards except those on the planetary exosphiliers, were completely unarmed.

A telespeaker, evidently operated by an electronic eye, ordered courteously, "Please give the password for today."

"Quantum," answered the supe, without breaking his stride.

"Thank you," the telespeaker called after them.

A great, latchless door opened gently, murmuring monotonously, "Beaural Building, Beaural Building," and shut behind them, terminating its statement on the sixth "Buil." The even, odorless atmosphere of the air-conditioning reminded them they were still dressed for outdoors; they halted and shrugged out of the thermosuits, dropping them in a conveniently placed disposer.

"Thank you," the apparatus rippled.

They entered a waiting elevator. "Four sixty," directed the supe. The door slid shut and almost instantly opened again. "Floor four hundred and sixty," said the speaker, "Thank you."

They rode a silent conveyor along a quietly-lit corridor, repeated the password to another telespeaker when they came to the break which let them cross the conveyor moving in the opposite direction, and stopped before a blank wall. "Quantum," began the supe. "Szuki Fred-hara, Immigration, with a controversial subject."

"One moment, please," said the wall. For the first time Ed-jo felt scared and alone.

"You may come in; the Director will see you," said the wall, opening into a room. At the far end, the Director lay on a couch looking up at a telescreen fixed at the angle most comfortable to the reclining position. Two other screens were on opposing walls. An Orsogian robot, its antenna stiffly

erect, tentacles hanging down, looking like an ancient floormop—as pictured in that priceless archaeological work recently excavated in the ruins of Old Chik, *Sears*—stood behind its master, whose lips moved as the wall closed behind Ed-jo and the supe.

"This is highly irregular, Szuki, practically controversial." The pettish voice, amplified, came from the walls as the Director continued to whisper. "Personal interviews are clumsy and inefficient, not versive at all. Can't understand why you didn't contact in the usual manner."

"This is a controversial case, Your Honor."

"I should think so. I suppose this incompletely-developed humanoid tried to slip in from Mars or Venus. Obviously a decoy, Szuki; you picked him up and let his mature accomplices get by you." In his agitation the director lifted his head a full three inches off the couch, just like one of the lower grades who were not granted full relief from physical activity.

"This is not a humanoid, Your Honor, but a terrestrial citizen, Green Ed-jo."

The director relaxed. "Ah. An impermissible. I still see no excuse for this distasteful personal proximity. The social adjuster will reclassify him for you."

"He is permissibly born, Your Honor. I thought his name might recall the case to you; it was a notorious one."

"Information has miles of electronic memory banks. I do not tax my own. You would be advised to do the same, Szuki."

"Yes, Your Honor. It only stuck in my mind because it was mentioned so often on *Human Interest Stories* before that program was discontinued as too suggestive of the archaic newscasts. This is the child born on Jupiter, of the organizers (j g) Green Jon-enry and Green Mary-en who secured a reproduction certificate (Class B, not renewable nor transferable, limited



"This is Smid Jor-al, Boss of Lank, The Boss. . . I advise you insubordinate, so-called Readers, not to interfere with the service . . ."



to one child and good until revoked) before taking up their assignment which was overseeing the collection, slaughter, dehydration, packing and shipping of Jovian goochs."

AT THE WORD "goochs" Ed-jo's homesickness overwhelmed him. The penguinlike, avian bipeds—the aboriginal Jovians—had been his nurses, companions, friends and mentors from birth. He thought with fierce nostalgia of the warm, feathery comfort of their touch, of the hundred services they performed in the degravitated area—the cosie—his parents had been forced to confine themselves to escape the tremendous gravitational pull of Jupiter. The boy bit his lips to keep from betraying emotion before these hateful Earth-people.

The director's eyes turned toward him, but the expression of extreme boredom did not change. "Jupiter, ay? Irregular, even if permissible. Well, tune the WBI and have his punchcard fed to the Central Troubleshooter. What do you suppose machines are for? Really, I wonder if you hadn't better feed your own card to a review-board; failure to make such an elementary decision seems to suggest need for reclassification, or even a Happy Despatch."

"His punchcard is defective; Central Troubleshooter will not respond to it."

"Nonsense! Preposterous! There hasn't been a defective punchcard since the Plotbureau Ok'd automatic rectifiers on the WBI vitastistics, which crosschecks with Information and the perpetual census. Don't try to cover up your inefficiency with such transparent untruths."

"As Your Honor knows," said Szuki in a leisurely manner, as though he were beginning to enjoy the conversation—now that the responsibility was resting on his superior—"the initial item on all punchcards is the date of birth and all the relevant statistics.

This is followed by the serial-number of the parents' permission to reproduce, thus opening a line of cross-reference leading back into the archives clear to the beginnings of civilization—to that glorious day when everyone on earth was fingerprinted and recorded without exception. If, on the other hand, no serial-number appears, the subject is automatically classified as a prole, and no certificate of reproduction is ever issued to him or her."

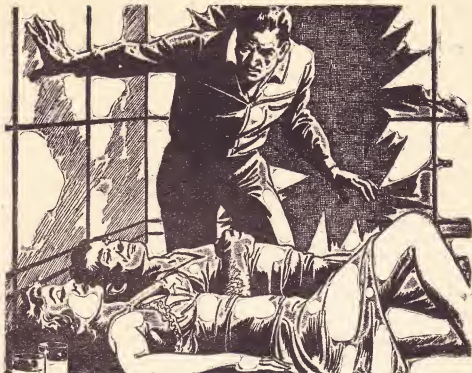
"Thon," the director murmured in correction; "ever issued to thon. Ancient history, all of it. What's the point of telling me stuff I could have gotten more pleasantly by tuning Information?"

"Only this, Your Honor: the third item is the juveny assignment; then the tentative classifications and reclassifications; the permanent one; and the preversty assignment at the age of six. Green Ed-jo's card lacks reference to a juveny and is without a classification since that is made in one. He is not only unclassified—he cannot be classified!"

There was a pause. "I feel the need of a stimulant," whispered the director.

His robot immediately reached out a tentacle toward the wall. After a short interval, a round opening appeared into which the tentacle was thrust, withdrawing a small lucite flagon. The wall closed as the robot broke the seal on the flask with another tentacle, and placed it against the director's lips with a third.

"Very inconvenient," he gasped, after the robot had removed the empty flagon, produced a fiber cloth, wiped his lips and discarded both cloth and flagon in the disposer. "Very inconvenient. Can't give it orders when it's holding something against my mouth; have to take it all at once, even if it chokes me. You'd think the Orsogians would improve their robots or else the televentors would come up with an attachment to solve the problem.



A man and a woman lay side by side, apparently unconscious.

"Hum. Now as to this unclassified boy. Hum. An immediate Happy Despatch would settle everything, but no reviewboard will recommend one while his punchcard shows no assignment, and therefore no unprofitable inefficiency."

"And he cannot be assigned without the required term at a preversity," prompted the supe.

"Nor sent to a preversity without a classification. It seems an insuperable problem."

"Exactly why I brought it to Your Honor in this slightly irregular fashion."

"In this very irregular fashion. Hum. It seems to me..."

There was silence while Ed-jo, bored, hungry, uncomfortable and nervous, fidgeted.

"Get me Information," ordered the director suddenly.

The two wall telescreens lit up, and a section of Information—a series

of wires, tubes and condensers—appeared on them.

"Are there still subnormals?" inquired the director.

"Please rephrase your question," said Information.

"Of all the inefficient devices! Oh, very well. Are these humans under the age of—" he broke off to look at Ed-jo—"say ten, whose tests indicate the impossibility of benefit from attendance at a preversity?"

Several tubes glowed; a light somewhere in the interior of Information flashed on and off. "Your answer is yes."

"Ha," exclaimed the director. "Ha. And what is done with these subnormals?"

"Please rephrase your question," admonished Information.

Sputtering that the prudery of machines was beyond all belief, the director complied, using more decorous language.

"Your answer is that such citizens are considered mutants."

"Mutants," repeated the director. "Of course. Deviations from the norm. Perfect logic. His eyes moved back to Information. "How are mutants conditioned for service?"

"Mutants are inadvisable material for preversities," said Information, "due to individualistic or un-uniform response. They are therefore assigned to tradeskills until the age of eighteen, when they are assigned just as though they were classified as proles—unless in the meantime they reveal disabilities indicating the desirability of a Happy Despatch."

"Thank you," said the director. "That is all."

"Thank *you*," responded Information, fading out.

THE SUPE cleared his throat nervously. "I should have mentioned that the boy has a definite physical disability. He can fly."

"I can *not*!" protested Ed-jo shrilly.

"Perhaps 'soar' is the more exact word. The boy can soar. After his—um—parents—"

"Szuki! Need you be so obscene?"

"Pardon me, Your Honor. The fact remains however. Having been born on Jupiter, he was never placed in a juvenry but remained in unhealthy proximity to—um—Green Mary-en and Jon-enry until the moment of debarkation at the Lank spaceport. Well, after the Greens—organizers, (j g)—were cleared for reentry I was confronted with the problem of this unclassified boy. I asked him to follow me, which he did quite normally in the comparatively-confined space of the exmosphlier; but once unhampered by the other passengers, as we reached the ground his steps became great leaps, taking him eight or ten feet into the air."

"I couldn't help it," interrupted Ed-jo sullenly; "the ground sort of had springs in it. Not like outside at home,

but like in the cosie. How did I know the ground was degravitated?"

"Hmmm, hmmm," said the director. "Conceived, gestated and born on Jupiter. His density must be that of the inhabitants—if there are any inhabitants but goochs. Undoubtedly unfit for terrestrial conditions. No question but that a reviewboard will recommend a Happy Despatch."

"Don't want a Happy Despatch; want something to eat."

"Not want a Happy Despatch? But everyone wants a Happy Despatch. If they didn't, there would be too many people. We look forward to it all our lives: it's our reward and culmination."

"Don't want—"

"You don't realize what you're saying. Why, when a reviewboard prescribes a Happy Despatch, the recipient is the subject of congratulations. For a week he is a—well, we have no word for it in the modern tongue. I disapprove of the affectation of archaic expressions, but if I may permit myself this once, for a week you are a god. All the privileges of the upper classifications are insignificant compared with undergoing the Happy Despatch. No exertion of any kind is necessary; even breathing is assisted by mechanical means and the subject lies in a stupor of relaxed bliss. All the carefully-cultivated inhibitions are put aside. You do what you want, think what you please. Eat for enjoyment, drink for pleasure, mate for lust. At the end of the week stupefied with excesses, you sink into a glorious, drugged sleep full of beautiful dreams."

"Don't want to sleep," persisted Ed-jo obstinately; "want something to eat."

"You are one of the most controversial citizens I've ever met," said the director irritably. "Information." The screen lit. "What of subjects who don't want a Happy Despatch when it is recommended?"

"Inadmissible hypothesis. Humans are conditioned to accept cybernetic suggestions unquestioningly, because machines are constructed to serve humanity."

"Suppose the subject weren't conditioned?"

A red light obscured Information's insides. "Beep-beep-beep."

"Paradox," muttered Szuki. "No possible reply. Everyone is intensively conditioned; information can't deal with non-existents."

"Really?" said the director coldly. "Your talent for discovering the obvious is phenomenal." He turned back to Information. "Suppose the human were aberrant, disloyal? How could he be compelled, for his own and society's good?"

"No human may use force against another," answered Information, "or direct a machine to use force against a human. Mankind survives because, having come to the edge of destruction through the use of violence, it has permanently given it up, conditioning itself firmly against its use. Force was always inefficient; conditioned obedience is efficient. No one thinks of disobeying the order of his superior, or of the machines constructed for the good of the human race."

The director grunted. "Thank you; that is all. I think, Szuki, a tradeskill for mutants is definitely indicated."

## 2



REEN ED-JO'S ten years at Lank Tradeskill would seem monstrous torture to us today, a routine of dull, unrelieved boredom. But then, all existence Before Freedom is drab and deadening compared

with our world of AF.

Monstrous and deadening as it was however, the tradeskill represented joyous activity contrasted with the preversity. Though the curricula was theoretically the same, the mutants were so varied and unpredictable in their reactions it was difficult to persuade them to spend their entire waking days looking raptly at television screens, as the normal students did. Consequently much time was used in "fieldwork"—a pedagogic survival ignored at the preversity, and repugnant to a civilization admiring immobility and reserving activity contemptuously for its lowest classifications.

So mutants who weren't completely apathetic became self-reliant and inquiring to a degree unknown to other proles, or the upper classifications, as they explored, not the pictures of industry on radiowaves, but the actual operations themselves. They took the elevators from the hundredth floor where the tradeskill was located, down to the fiftieth and lower floors where the base of the Beaural Building broadened out to its ultimate area to accommodate the machineshops, refineries and factories housed there.

Growing older, they explored still more unusual places. They went deep into the earth to the caverns where the cyclotrons produced power not only for the city of Lank, but for a share of the immense surplus transmitted by radio to the robots, copters, intercontinentals, and mining and drilling machines far away. They even went entirely outside the building—many proles spent entire lives under one roof—to visit others housing foundries, rolling mills, or the cybernets: the machines determining and directing practically all human activity, and the even more complex ones which designed and then coordinated production, gearing it to terrestrial needs and export demands.

Recalling the humiliation of his introduction to Earth, Ed-jo was careful not to betray his superiority over

gravity to the tradeskill's strawbs and supes—the organizer never appeared in person, but presumably viewed all that went on from the 377th floor, where she was infrequently consulted. However, when he felt free of the presence of adults, Ed-jo demonstrated his disability for the pleasure of his particular friends, Nka Will-jim, a cyclops, and Mulla Fera-liz, who had two pair of arms, with six fingers on each of her four hands—which made a problem of the otherwise simple business of calling on the dispenser for a thermosuit to wear outside the building.

At first, the advantage was all theirs, for Ed-jo was limited to showing how he could apparently climb a straight wall without handholds, or rise from floor to ceiling and descend gently. Fera-liz, walking on four hands—or combing her hair, eating a hydroponic apple, spinning a top and thumbing her nose simultaneously—was vastly more spectacular.

Will-jim's talents were of an entirely different order: he had a photographic memory. In other historical periods this would have been an invaluable asset; at a time when retention of anything beyond elementary vocabulary was considered atavism, it was simply a curiosity. There seemed to be no point in remembering facts or principles when the answer to any problem, properly formulated, could be gotten instantly by tuning Information. As sheer entertainment however, Will-jim's ability to recall what had appeared on the telescreen—down to the most trivial detail—a day, week or month before was as fascinating as his single, centered eye.

It was only when the tradeskill made excursions beyond the city of Lank that Ed-jo was able to relax the constant control he kept on his legs, to simulate what was—to him—the hobbling stride of the Earth-born. Once the helicopters had lifted them

from the roof and borne them beyond the hills surrounding Lank, out into the pale desert or the rugged canyons, he was free—except for concealment from the strawb in charge—to sprint across the ground in great leaps, to hop across wide gullies, or bound over the tops of all but the very tallest trees.

As the supes of the tradeskill had long noted unhappily, many of the mutants—in addition to their characteristic poor response to conditioning—were particularly deficient in accepting the agorophobia which was such an important factor in Beaural civilization. A normal, well-adjusted man hesitated to go from floor to floor, suffered painful anxiety at the thought of going outside a building, and was terrified at the prospect of visiting the wild country beyond Lank—even, as in the case of the tradeskill officials, when it was part of their assignment. The mutants, on the other hand, actually seemed to enjoy the wild country which stretched for thousands of miles toward the cities of Chik and Nork, a vast primeval wilderness broken only by outposts—places of sad exile, to which assignment was dreaded, and usually preceded request for a review-board almost always prescribing a Happy Despatch—where were mined the raw materials for the factories, mills and powerhouses of the cities.

Except for those once designated by the ancient and outmoded terms, "moron", "cretin", and so forth, who in spite of their docility were early given a Happy Despatch, the mutants appeared more at ease among the rocks and brush and ruins of individual buildings (dating from the time before all activities were concentrated in the cities, and food had been raised—incredibly—directly on the surface of the earth) than they were in the tightly enclosed safety of the buildings.

WHILE THE strawb clung to the comparative comfort of the helicopter's interior, Ed-jo, Will-jim and Fera-liz gamboled and explored without the slightest thought of the ostensible reason for the outing—which was to contrast the order and efficiency of life under the Plotbureau with what it had been in the mad scramble of the Dark Ages, or the slow and painful reconstruction in the period before the Bureau took over. Instead of absorbing this edifying lesson, they threw rocks at wild rabbits, cowered helplessly into whatever shelter they could seize when a herd of bison pounded past, or ran in shrieking fright at the sight of a bear.

It was a bear that finally forced Ed-jo's disability on the notice of the strawb. Fera-liz had been climbing along the underside of a sycamore limb, an understandably-simple acrobatic feat for anyone with six limbs. Will-jim, usually content to leave the more spectacular athletic trials to the others, this time had an impulse to imitate Fera-liz. While they looked on, shouting ironic encouragement, he struggled up the trunk and out onto the limb. Suddenly the bear was at the foot of the tree, standing erect, his forepaws resting on the bark, his long muzzle sniffing curiously upward.

"It's all right," whispered Ed-jo; "we'll just have to wait till he gets tired and goes away."

The bear was, unfortunately, of a different species from those to which they were accustomed. Slowly, gracefully, digging in his claws, he began to climb. Surveying the situation calmly from his perch, Will-jim called down, "Run toward the copter, Liz; make as much noise as you can. Throw a rock at him, Jo, without attracting him toward you."

They obeyed, but the bear refused to be decoyed. Will-jim edged further out; the bear put an exploratory paw on the crotch where it joined the trunk. Fera-liz was nowhere in sight,

but Ed-jo knew that by the time she reached the copter, explained the situation, and got the strawb to bring the machine to Will-jim's rescue, it would be too late.

Will-jim cautiously moved out still further, to where the limb was unquestionably just a branch—an extremely supple one. Lazily, the bear followed. "OK," shouted Ed-jo; "here I come."

He felt a surge of well-being as his feet left the ground. There was no room for him on the branch, nor time for him to pause there; the bear was very close. He was not sure what would happen when Will-jim's weight was added to his own, but he grabbed the cyclops around the waist and they descended to the ground. Ed-jo came down at a faster speed than he was used to, but one which could certainly not be called falling. Then they ran, leaving the bear, with a look of puzzled injury, staring into empty space.

The copter had already risen to rescue Will-jim, so that the strawb witnessed Ed-jo's jump. She was much disturbed. Such anachronistic muscular displays betokened maladjustment, insecurity, overcompensation, aggression, and all the other factors incompatible with Beaural Civilization. Shaking her head, she predicted a reviewboard before he was a month on his first assignment.

THAT ASSIGNMENT came from the social adjuster when Green Ed-jo was just turned eighteen, along with those of Nka Will-jim and Mulla Fera-liz.

The cybernetic voice spoke from the telescreen, "...maintenance crew Lank one-oh-eight." Adding explanatorily, "P7 mutants (physical divergences from the established norm, minus responsiveness to conditioning, notable bodily activity) are recorded as satisfactory in extraurban labor. Unless a controversial disposition appears, there is a negative probability of reassignment or reviewboard for an average of



four years, sixty-five days, thirteen and a quarter hours. These three P7 mutants will remove immediately to Prok quarters B85A on the eighty fifth floor of the Metro Building. Since you will have to leave your room, floor and building, you will receive the password for today by stepping up to the screen for proper identification. . . ."

"Well," said Will-jim, blinking his single eye, "at least we're going to be together."

Fera-liz snapped eight fingers with a crackling noise "There was no marital assignment attached."

Will-jim looked disgusted. "I guess that's what the cybernet meant by minus responsiveness to conditioning. You've been told often enough that mutants get no marital status before twenty."

"That's right," said Fera-liz. "Gosh. Two years. Sometimes a girl gets an urge."

"You'll probably be assigned some prole who can barely move," suggested Ed-jo unsympathetically. "Compensate for your extra arms, you know."

"What's the difference?" asked Will-jim. "Proles can't get a certificate to reproduce anyway."

"I wish I'd get a tall fellow with dark curly hair," murmured Fera-liz dreamily. "I'd just love to run twenty four fingers through it."

The password for that day being "dianetic", they ordered thermosuits, not bothering to indicate a special for Fera-liz, since she would have no occasion to use more than one pair of arms on the trip. The suits were delivered almost instantly through the servadors; after putting them on they took an elevator to the roof and a jeecar along the bileway to the Metro Building. "I think this password business is simply silly," announced Fera-liz, "and so are all those guards standing around."

"Survivals are always silly; if they aren't silly, then they aren't survivals,

but merely a custom which is changing its form or function," said Will-jim pedantically.

**I**N THE PROLE quarters of the Metro Building they met the other three members of the maintenance crew. "We've never worked with mutants before," said Ching Mei-lu, who had a habit of tossing her head, "I'm thrilled. Can you see just as well with one eye?" she asked Will-jim.

"As well as what?" he countered, "When you have two eyes the focus of one corrects the other. When you have one eye there is no need of correction. I see as well as I need."

If Will-jim had meant to reprove her, the reproof was ineffectual. "And four arms. Don't some of them get in your way?" Without waiting for an answer, she turned to Ed-jo. "What a funny color for hair! It's sort of yellow, isn't it?"

"At one time," explained Will-jim, "as you will no doubt recall from your conditioning, men were divided into physically-distinctive groups. Some of these had light-colored hair and eyes which, for some reason not clear to us, they cherished as a symbol of superiority over the majority of men who, like us, had full, natural pigmentation. These whites—as they were mis-called—for actually they were a yellowish pinky-gray—demonstrated their superiority by robbing, murdering and enslaving those of a different complexion whenever they could. However this deficiency of pigmentation is biologically recessive, so that it has gradually disappeared, even though traces of it crop up occasionally in freaks like Ed-jo."

"What's the good of remembering all that tiresome stuff the way you do?" asked Fera-liz. "When we want to know any of those silly things all we have to do is tune Information."

"We haven't been on this job long ourselves," explained Yohsen Jo-hans. "We were only assigned a few months

ago from the preversity; the three old members of the crew were reassigned yesterday."

"We think they got a reviewboard and that almost certainly means a Happy Despatch for extraurban workers," exclaimed Meilu. "Of course they're enjoying themselves tremendously right now, but I just can't help feeling a little sad—"

"How you chatter on," interrupted Nore Lil-isa, whose black skin, much darker than the others', had a glowing quality Ed-jo had never noticed in a girl before.

"Lil-isa is right," said Jo-hans; "sometimes remarks we know are just silly can be considered controversial."

"Oh, don't mind us," said Will-jim. "Mutants don't condition well."

Jo-hans gave him a sharp look, but the cyclop's eye stared innocently back. "Well," he muttered at last, "I suppose you'll want to know about the job. Most proles detest going out of the building into the wild country and doing different work each time, but we sort of like it. Not that we haven't been conditioned to prefer regular routine but..." his voice trailed off uncertainly, as though he had said more than he had intended, and didn't quite know how to retract his words.

"We don't care much for monotony," said Ed-jo. "We're atavars, you know—throwbacks to the days when everybody worked outside the building where they lived."

JO-HANS kept his eyes down. "You probably know how Lank gets its water. Three aqueducts run east and north to tap rivers, and there is a short conveyor for converted seawater."

"I would have thought water from the ocean would make the aqueducts obsolete," remarked Ed-jo.

Jo-hans was silent, but Will-jim said, "It's one of those things. Beaural civilization is full of contradictions—"

"Oh dear," protested Fera-liz; "if

you're going to start talking like a conditioning cybernet again, I'm going to sleep."

"No cybernet ever said anything so controversial," stated Jo-hans grimly. "I'd think I'd rather not listen to the rest of what you were going to say."

"I think we can trust these people," put in Lil-isa gently. "Go on, Will-jim."

"I'd be willing to bet, for instance, that plans were drawn up centuries ago for more converters to replace the freshwater aqueducts, and the Plot-bureau has never done a thing to start the replacement-process."

"The replacement-process would have gone on by itself once the teleplanner made the blueprints," argued Ed-jo. "What you mean is that the Bureau actually stopped the cycle somewhere."

"That doesn't make sense," objected Mei-lu. "The Bureau exists because it directs mankind with the utmost efficiency."

There was a silence. Finally Jo-hans said in his heavy, slow way, "These are controversial thoughts."

"Not mine," said Fera-liz. "I wasn't even thinking about such dull stuff. Do you have a marital assignment, Jo-hans?"

Jo-hans blushed and shook his head. "I was supposed to have, but a ruling by the social adjuster postponed marital status for extraurban workers till the age of twenty-five."

"Oh no! wailed Fera-liz. "In seven years I'll be a—what's the archaic word, Will-jim?"

"Old maid. What difference does it make?"

"You wouldn't understand. Sometimes a girl gets an urge."

"Look," said Jo-hans nervously, "about the job. The fresh water aqueducts are very ancient, dating way back to the Dark Ages. You'll hardly believe this, but they were originally made of steel. Naturally, in the course

of centuries they have been repaired so often their entire length has been replaced, first by duramagnesium—which is hardly used at all, nowadays—and finally by bessemite.”

“Honestly,” commented Mei-lu, “it’s you who talk like a cybernet. It’s all so simple,” she went on, addressing herself to Fera-Liz. “When something goes wrong on the aqueducts or the seawater conveyor, the electronic impulses running along them are interrupted. This naturally activates a troubleshooter—”

“Not the big social troubleshooter connected to the WBI and the loyalty checks, but a little mechanical troubleshooter concerned only with our job,” explained Lil-isa in her soft voice, which reminded Ed-jo so illogically of the half-forgotten warmth and comfort of the goochs. He was aware of a perfectly irrational pleasure in knowing she had no marital assignment.

“Which locates the exact spot affected by teletectors, which also show whether it’s a leak or a failure in the syphons or the pumping system—”

“But it’s usually a stoppage in the conveyor,” interrupted Jo-hans. “Telemeters measure the replacement if one is called for and the piece is fabricated to their specifications.”

“Sounds fully automatic and mechanical so far,” said Ed-jo.

“Not entirely; as you’ll see after you’re on the job awhile. Anyway it isn’t mechanical from then on. The replacement is loaded on a freightcopter, since they can’t use rockepults the way they do for raw materials—”

“Why not?” asked Fera-liz without much interest.

“Because the rockepults only work between fixed points,” said Will-jim. “Anybody can see that with one eye. There wouldn’t be any point in setting up a rockepult terminal every time the pipe had to be repaired—and if there were they’d need copters to do it.”

“Well,” continued Jo-hans, “we go out in the copter with the replacement, the tools and the machines and make the repairs. That’s all there is to it. Most proles hate it because the hours are odd and irregular.”

“I think I’m going to like it,” said Ed-jo.

### 3



THE CREW got their first call the next day, just before Nightfeed. They ate cold rations on the freightcopter, sitting wedged in by machinery. “I like this,” announced Fera-liz. “It’s fun to eat this way.”

“In very ancient times it was frequently done for pleasure, and went by the obsoelte word, ‘picnic’, among the savages who practised the custom,” Will-jim told her.

“It’s considered one of the most disagreeable features of the job,” said Jo-hans. “Leaving the security of the building is bad enough, but to miss Nightfeed—when every prole in Lank is eating at the same time—is supposed to be the unhappiest deprivation of all.”

“Well, I still think it’s fun,” insisted Fera-liz.

The copter set down in a spot where no trees—only heavy brush—grew guided there by a course set by the coordinated calculations of the teletector, troubleshooter and several other machines concerned in the repair of the aqueduct. The searchlights, drawing power from the generators of far-off Lank, were quickly set up; the new bessemite section unloaded; and the cyberwelders rolled into place. Beyond the brilliant lights focussed on the spot under repair, the desert stretched out in blackness.

But not quite total blackness. A sky

full of stars was visible to Ed-jo as soon as his eyes became accustomed to the dark. "What are you looking at?" asked Lil-isa, her soft voice close to him.

"Up there," he said. "One of those stars in Jupiter; I was born on it."

He could hear the startled indrawing of her breath. "You were *what*?"

"I was born on Jupiter; it says so on my punchcard. Just for fun I got all the dope from Information. Seems there was a slip-up somewhere; anyway I'm the only one ever happened."

"I can hardly believe it," whispered Lil-isa.

"Why not? My mother and father had a certificate. I'm permissibly born," he added with some pride.

"I didn't mean *that*. I—well, I can't explain just what I did mean, right now. Tell me, can you point to Jupiter?"

"Afraid I never got too much out of conditioning, especially when the cybernet was going on about astronomy and the spectroscope and all that," Ed-jo confessed. "Those celestial charts moving around—they made me dizzy."

Lil-isa laughed. "It's better to learn out of books, if you really want to know something—instead of just being conditioned for the sake of convenience."

"Books?"

"Reading."

"Both words are familiar. I hear them often on the telescreen, but not the way you've used them."

"That's what your friend Will-jim would call another of the contradictions of Beaural civilization. Semantics outlawed the 'figure of speech' centuries ago, and its use is considered a controversial sign; yet the telerecords are full of metaphor. They still speak of 'reading meaning into things' and 'compiling books' though both the verb and the noun have officially disappeared long ago. Perhaps you may find out that they have other than

metaphorical meanings sometime. Meanwhile, up there, where my finger is pointing, is Jupiter."

"Ah," murmured Ed-jo, "it's bright."

"And there—over there—is Isha, or Venus. It's smaller, much smaller, but much brighter."

"Oh, Venus. Yes," said Ed-jo indifferently. "That's where the humanoids are so backward, isn't it?"

"Oh! Oh you—you *patriot*! 'Humanoids'. 'Backward'. And mutants are supposed to be hard to condition!"

Jo-hans' voice called, "Hey there, everybody. Stand by, will you?"

The work of replacing the defective section had gone smoothly until the articulated arm of the Robocrane jammed. Theoretically, this could not have happened; and, having happened, the crane was designed to repair itself.

But here again the dilemma of Beaural civilization interposed its special paralysis. A self-repair machine must necessarily have another self-repairing machine behind it to service it; the second must have a third, and the third a fourth, and so on endlessly. Any truly and completely automatic and self-repairing machine must be part of a design which integrates all the devices in existence: an interdependent, interlocking mechanical civilization. Such a system would be self-sufficient, and humanity would be superfluous; at the end of every path, the bosses of the Plotbureau were faced with this inevitable climax. Since it was one they dared not meet, they temporized as usual, all machines were self-repairing and fully-automatic up to a point; beyond that point, somewhere along the line, there was no automatic, self-repairing machine behind the one which had broken down. Humanity, in the person of working proles, justified its continued existence.

JO-HANS explained, "It must be jammed in two places. Can't get

the boom down where we could work on it. Lower away," he commanded in demonstration, but the robocrane remained helplessly still, holding its load high in the air.

"What about climbing up and seeing what's jamming the joint?" suggested Will-jim.

"Climb *that*?" jeered Mei-lu, pointing to the limber smoothness, its rippled length stiffened in the glare of the searchlights which brought out all colors of the quonium. "What would you hang on to?"

"Have to send in a call for another crane or a cybrepairer. Which'll it be?"

"Wait," said Fera-liz. "Four arms are better than two; let me try." Without waiting, she put both pairs of arms around the base of the boom, and endeavored with the aid of her feet to inch her way up.

"No good," judged Will-jim. "You might do all right up where it tapers to a reasonable thickness, but the base is too broad. I'm afraid Jo is going to have to show off his powers for our new friends."

"Coming at you," said Ed-jo cheerfully, not unmindful of Lil-isa's curious look. "Here goes."

He stepped back two paces, took the slightest of runs, and jumped, soaring into the air. "Oh my," breathed Lil-isa; "oh my."

He landed lightly and easily just behind the top of the crane where it spread out into the three fingerlike-ends grasping the load, "Throw some light up here, will you? I'm all in shadow."

It didn't take more than five minutes to locate the source of one of the troubles—a branch of dead manzanita which had somehow blown onto the boom and lodged a long, stiff splinter into a thin crack between the crane's articulations. Working it out, he jumped lightly down.

"Something tells me you're going

to be useful around here," remarked Jo-hans."

**C**ALLS ON Maintenance Crew Lank 108 were infrequent. There were hours and days when the six had no other obligation but to lounge about the otherwise-empty prole quarters on the eighty fifth floor of the Metro Building, watching the telescreen—or basking under sun lamps. To those of a higher classification this would have represented perfect adjustment; complete leisure spent looking at a telescreen, which automatically strained out excitement from recreation, was the perfect norm.

"Seems pretty silly and wasteful to me," fretted Ed-jo. "The social-adjusters, the Central Troubleshooter, the loyaltycheckers, and all the rest, are supposed to arrange everything so efficiently; yet we spend most of our time in such complete boredom—"

"Where on earth did you pick up that obsolete word?" asked Lil-isa.

"What? Oh, 'boredom'. Jim told me how, in the Dark Ages, when everybody had to be doing something all the time to avoid thinking of the misery of life, they used the word to designate unhappy free time. Of course the Bureau has completely reversed things and the word is, as you say, obsolete; but, being an atavar, I seem to suffer from it. Well, we spend most of our time in such complete boredom that there is really nothing to do but turn on the barbituon and sleep from Firstfeed to Nightfeed. Personally, I'd much rather be out away from the city, out in the wild country; it's far more enjoyable than lying around like an imitation director all day."

"Oooh, what you said," gurgled Mei-lu. "Controversial."

"You couldn't leave the floor, much less the building or the city," Jo-hans pointed out practically. "You couldn't get the password for the day, unless you had proper business."

"The truth is," began Will-jim in

that slightly-monotonous voice which indicated the cyclops was marshaling a series of facts in his astonishing memory, "that the world is still vastly overpopulated—in spite of the Happy Despatch, and the rigid denial of reproduction-certificates. Nor is this brought about by the birth of impermissables—who account for only some ten percent of the population. Once there were more than two thousand million people in the world—"

"That's just silly," announced Feraliz. "There aren't cities enough for them to live in. Or are you going to tell us that the ancients of the Dark Ages had more than twelve cities?"

"As a matter of fact, they did—as you'd know if you'd absorbed any of your history conditioning. But they also lived in the wild country—which wasn't wild in those days, but cultivated. That's another obsolete word, which means that food was grown right on the surface of the land, direct from the soil."

"How quaint," said Mei-lu.

"In the Dark Ages of 1914-2177, the population was reduced by the wars—particularly the so-called Endless War—and their aftermath to a mere handful. I'd say there were less than a hundred thousand wretched and terrified survivors, who realized that men never dare again to use violence if humanity was to escape the extinction that had nearly overtaken it. They built a new civilization, based entirely on efficiency—since war had proved the most inefficient method ever devised for accomplishing anything."

"In the days before the perfection of Informtion—or on Isha or Orsog—you would be a teacher," said Liliisa, with admiration. For some reason Ed-jo felt annoyed with both her and Will-jim.

**W**ILL-JIM continued, "At first, the most important aims of the

Plotbureau—then a small group of surviving scientists, who took their name from one of the two warring governing bodies—were to reconstruct old machines and devise new ones to supply all human wants, and to breed as rapidly as possible to replace the destroyed millions. But the multiplication of machines to serve all man's needs meant that more and more machine-tenders were machines, and the need for human beings to run machines was less and less. The working-day of the prole was reduced to six hours, to three, to two hours; and it could have been reduced still further had the Bureau not realized that here, too, they were facing the inevitable conclusion: the uselessness, hence the needlessness of humanity."

"How did they get out of that situation?" asked Ed-jo.

"The Bureau would probably not have been averse to accepting the paradox of an entirely idle race, had not the proles revolted at their idleness and attempted to overthrow the Plotbureau itself," Will-jim said. "At this time, the world's population was more than five hundred million; it was scattered all over the wild country, for the Endless War had made the old cities uninhabitable.

"To guard against further attempts at rebellion, the Bureau immediately set the working day back at six hours so proles would have no time on their hands for discontent. Naturally, this aggravated the problem and reminded archaeologists of the ancient fable of the Dullupyaë—a mythical beast who dug holes only to fill them up. The Bureau's solution was to build the twelve cities we know—in every case near the ruins of famous ancient ones—and remove everyone except the gangs, now sent out in rotation to the mines, from all except these twelve cities. All others were concentrated where they would be under constant observation and control.



"They also instituted a long-range program of reducing the population by an earlier and earlier recommendation of the Happy Despatch (originally euthanasia offered only to senile invalids in great pain). They followed this up with review-boards, and the issuance of reproduction-certificates, which throw a stigma on those born without them. In spite of all this, there are still too many people in the world: one hundred and twenty million. The Bureau must find useful work for them to do, or finally resign itself to seeing the human race replaced entirely by machines. Colonization might be a temporary answer—it would be temporary, for conditions on the colonized planets must eventually approximate those of Earth—but Osrog and Isha are not subject to settlement, and Jupiter seems at present unsuitable for colonization on a large scale; the Bureau must remember what happened when Ed-jo was produced there."

"This is dull stuff," yawned Feraliz. "No wonder I never absorbed much conditioning."

"I don't see why I can't just walk out of the building, password or no," argued Ed-jo. "Who's to stop me if the guards can't use force?"

"Conditioning," answered Lil-isa; "no human being will commit an asocial act."

"What about the women who have impermissable children?" inquired Feraliz.

"Except that one," amended the dark girl. "The biological drive is so far stronger than propriety."

"Well, I'm a mutant," persisted Ed-jo, "and mutants don't condition well."

"I never listened to such controversial talk in my life," said Mei-lu. "What will you say at your next loyalty-check?"

Ed-jo grunted. Jo-hans said slowly, "Lu has something, you know. Are

all mutants so inclined to controversy?"

"Most P7s aren't too well adjusted," stated Will-jim. "The others—the ones who used to be called subnormal—never have a controversial thought."

THE TELESCREEN, which had been lecturing on *Orsogian Eating Habits and Their Effect on Temperamental Differences*, suddenly announced, "Alert Lank Maintenance Crew One-oh-eight. Stoppage in the seawater conveyor. Stand by."

Mei-lu made a face. "Nasty work," she said. "Dank. Clammy."

"Anything is better than nothing," muttered Ed-jo, jumping up, and already picturing Lil-isa clad in a thermosuit for outdoors, which made her exotic beauty so much more exciting than in its natural, indoor state.

The conveyor ran in a nearly-straight line between the ocean and the city, passing at one point perilously near the ruins of Old Lank and its deadly atmosphere. It was of relatively simple design, consisting of a pumping-station which drew in the salt water and raised it to the basin. Thence it descended by gravity through a series of rotary filters to the vast reservoir beneath the Capiol Building. Bileways—not true bileways, of course, since they ran, not from building to building above the city, but from the reservoir to the basin—gave access to the filtering-stations and brought the byproducts to the city for further processing.

Though the filters were self-cleaning, trouble constantly developed. This time it was at Number 3 Station, close to the ocean. They got out of the jeecars, and Lil-isa paused at the seaward edge of the bileway before following the others into the station. The sun was little more than overhead, and the steady breeze blew her black hair.

"Isn't it wonderful to get away

from the buildings, into the free air!"

Ed-jo came over and stood beside her. Away from the sterilized air which circulated through the Metro Building and automatically removed all odors (so that food was practically tasteless—a development thoroughly repugnant to us nowadays, but one quite acceptable and even desirable to the peculiar asceticism of Beaural civilization) he was aware of all the natural redolence around him: the salty sting of brine tinged with the oiliness of drying seaweed, the sweetish scent of vegetation, and—strangest and most disturbing of all—the smell of the girl's hair and body.

She turned to him. "Did you mean what you said, about wanting to get out into the wild country?"

"Sure I did. And nobody was able to tell me why I couldn't.

"It was because we were afraid, Jo."

"What? I don't get you. Who's we? And what were you afraid of?"

"Wait. Let me tell it my way. I think we're probably safe from tele-detectors here; there's no particular reason why one should be focused on us."

Ed-jo scratched his head. "I don't understand anything. But go on."

"Don't you see: it isn't just the buildings or the city you want to get away from? Both are good and useful things in themselves. Like the machines, which do so much for humanity and would do more if men were not afraid to be made obsolete—as though man were just a flesh-and-blood machine. And like the work, so futile and boresome. The lack of it would drive us to despair and death."

"Say, this was going to be an explanation; instead, you've got me more confused than ever. A thing can't be good and useful if its opposite is good and useful."

"Human work and the work of machines are not opposites, because men

can do things that machines—even the most sensitive of Orsogian robots—can't do. Machines can reproduce music and paintings with absolute fidelity, but they can neither compose nor design, except as an extension of an already conceived pattern. They can invent—given specific data of the need to be fulfilled—but they cannot imagine new needs. They can think; they have conditioned reflexes which respond to stimuli, but they cannot speculate on the nature of the universe, or whether time, like space, is curved."

LIL-ISA PUT her hand, slender dark fingers showing up sharply on the neutral plastic stuff of Ed-jo's suit, on his arm. "Don't you see why the dilemma of the Bureau exists, and why the Bureau can never resolve it? In devising a mechanical, efficient system, the Bureau has devised a mechanistic system which rules out all non-material, all spiritual activity? That's why, under the Bureau, man can be superseded; for there is nothing man can do by material means alone which a machine can't do better. But man has a soul as well as a body; free to develop that soul and allow it expression, there can be no reason to limit the perfection of machinery. There is no longer any competition; the two stand finally as complementary to each other.

"Men can and should work six, eight, fourteen hours a day, doing all the things machines can never do, while the machines in turn take care of every want without attention from men. Machines to do what used to be called drudgery—from producing food to making the most extensive mathematical calculations—while men concentrate on pure thought, pure speculation, pure creation. The Bureau can never admit this, for admitting it would automatically mean the Bureau's own abdication. The Boss and

the bosses would have to give up their power; classification would cease, for there would be no reason for one man to be a supe or strawb, and another a prole. Review-boards and Happy Despatch would go; so would permission to reproduce, and marital assignments—"

"Oh, come on," exclaimed Ed-jo in shocked tones. "Surely that's going too far. You wouldn't suggest that human beings mate without proper authorization, based on biological data and psychological tests?"

She looked up at him, the slightest twitch at the corners of the red lips in the ebony face. "Does that sound so horrible? Suppose a very intelligent girl had an urge like Fera-liz? Not just a general urge, but a specific one, toward a rather stupid, but lovable man. Don't you think they might be better suited than partners assigned by a series of electronic tubes?"

"It's too confusing," he muttered.

She dropped into a more serious tone. "Don't you see: your instinct is perfectly right in wanting to get away from the city. Only it isn't the physical city you want to escape—at least not permanently. You want to get away from the domination of the Plot-bureau; from the ordering and regulating of every moment; from the knowledge that your life-history is a series of holes on a punchcard which will eventually prompt a machine to recommend your premature death."

"You're talking rebellion against the Bureau," said Ed-jo slowly.

Lil-isa gave him a contemptuous look. "Yes, I am. Any review-board being fed a transcription of what I've said would immediately recommend a Happy Despatch. The difference between what I've been saying and the aimless grumbling of you mutants is—"

"Is what?"

"Is that we intend to do something about it."

## 4



IELS SVEN-YORN worked in the Metro Building's power-plant. He was remarkably old for a prole—nearly forty—and what was still more odd, single; the woman to whom he had been marital-

ly-assigned had received the Happy Despatch years before, and unaccountably he had never gotten a new assignment.

In the vastness of the prole quarters on the eighty-fifth floor, Sven-yorn was conspicuous—and not merely because of his longevity. Often, groups of proles gathered around him and indulged in long conversation. Garrulity among the P7 mutants was accepted as a concomitant of their atavism, and among the extraurban workers as psychological compensation for their occupations; but that normally-employed proles should prefer verbal exchange with one of their kind to watching the telescreen, listening to an audicord, or turning on the barbituon to induce unconsciousness, was inexplicable.

Green Ed-jo's unresponsiveness to the Tradeskill's conditioning had left him a large share of natural curiosity, a faculty definitely not approved by the Plotbureau. His interest in Sven-yorn jumped when he noticed on several occasions that the older man, during the moments when he was not surrounded by other proles, was doing a strange thing. Surreptitiously he was holding a small, compact object in his hands—an object which seemed to absorb his entire attention, just as a telescreen normally would. The thing appeared to be composed of many layers of some thin material, fastened together at one side. Its usefulness

was not apparent, yet Sven-yorn kept staring at it, at intervals lifting a layer by its loose edge and turning it over.

In the days Before Freedom, as everyone knows, the handling of objects, except in the course of work, was practically obsolete. There was little occasion to touch, lift, pull, push or carry anything. The thermal regulation of the buildings at a constant temperature which would seem enervating to us, made the use of clothing functionless, except for those who were compelled to put on thermoplastic suits to go outside.

(We of today, not being under the horrible compulsion to suppress the passions, encourage the wearing of otherwise-superfluous clothing, just as we encourage privacy. This was unthinkable—at least for the proles—under the Bureau, and for the same reasons: to foster the greatest possible intimacy between men and women.)

Food and drink were the inescapable exceptions, but though contact was hardly avoidable, they came from the pneumospensers in such long-handled containers that the fastidiousness of that asensual and asensuous age was appeased, if not served. Trinkets and playthings had long since been discarded. Information which earlier cultures obtained from compasses or watches, sliderules and binoculars could still easier be got by saying "Information Please" to the microphoned walls, or going through the slightly more complex speech necessary to set the proper teletectors in motion.

It was not only curiosity then, but something like a sense of prudish shock which moved Ed-jo at the sight of Sven-yorn fondling the unknown object. Will-jim shook his head when nudged inquiringly. "Why don't you ask Lil-isa? She's been around here longer than we have."

"Afraid she's annoyed with me,"

confessed Ed-jo. "She talked pretty controversially the day we were out fixing the conveyor and I... Well, I guess I was too astonished at hearing anyone speak of rebellion against the Bureau—"

"Shut up!" ordered Will-jim between his teeth. "Want to get her into trouble? There's probably a teletector on us right now!"

Ed-jo blushed. "It's all right," said Yohsen Jo-hans from behind them. "If there are teletectors taking down what you say, the transcription won't go to the troubleshooter."

"The rebellion against the Bureau then," said Will-jim, "isn't just talk? It's organized?"

"That's right." Jo-hans spoke apologetically toward the cyclops. "I was pretty sure about you, but Lil-isa wanted to sound out our friend here first. When he didn't seem enthusiastic, we thought we'd give him a while to think things over; but spotting Sven-yorn reading a book like this—"

"So that's what he's doing. I've heard about books and reading, but it's supposed to be a lost art."

"All this stuff is over my head," complained Ed-jo. "First, Jim knows rebellion is organized—"

"Obviously if there is interference between teletectors and the troubleshooter, it is because someone is using the ancient device called sabotage. Now who would sabotage? Who *could* sabotage? Who'd benefit from sabotage? Answer: proles. Not as individuals, but as a conspiratorial group. Hence, organized rebellion. Q E D."

"What's that mean?"

"Curious events described."

"Oh. And what's this stuff about books and reading? I thought they were figures of speech."

**J**O-HANS LED them over to Sven-yorn's cot. "Two members of our crew, Yorn," he explained, "who have

thought books and reading were figures of speech."

Sven-yorn grinned, showing teeth which the soft, despised food of those days did nothing to keep strong. "So they are," he said. "So they are—today. But figures of speech have an ancestry; before they became abstractions, they existed as concrete realities. For many centuries the written word was the repository of nearly all learning, and the means of conveying nearly all knowledge. Men wrote what they knew—as much as could be conveyed by words—into books; and others read what they had written and then knew nearly as much as their teachers.

"Originally the prime means of human communication had been oral; little by little it was superseded by the visible word, but never entirely replaced. The oral tradition continued to exist, furtively, as a slightly disreputable and disinherited relative; the book, the newspaper, the magazine were dominant. Then, during the early part of the Dark Age, a revulsion occurred: the oral tradition began recapturing lost ground by utilizing the visual process to shortcircuit the visual machinery. Pictures were easier to look at than alphabetical symbols, and sounds were easier to hear. The simpler rather than the more complex mental efforts appealed to the human distrust of thought. Reading and writing became lost arts when the need for them vanished, as their place was filled by the television and all its cybernetic allies.

"The Plotbureau, remolding a world from the odds and ends escaping destruction, was satisfied that this should be so. Men who read may get strange and disturbing ideas; those who only hear or see are more docile; they can be more satisfactorily conditioned.

"Reading and writing were never really lost; in every generation there

were a few who distrusted the glib openness of the machines, and doggedly kept literacy alive as a safeguard against the failure or treachery of the substitutes. Since books are the only known counteragent to the conditioning which subordinates men to the will of the Bureau, the Readers went to their Happy Despatch early—but not before they had taught others to read, and so to question the complete benevolence of the twelve bosses and The Boss.

"Long before the Bureau itself perceived it and began to be frightened into passivity, the Readers began to understand the central problem of Beaural civilization. They also realized that the Bureau could never embrace the only possible solution; indeed, they saw that inevitably the Bureau would take courage and destroy mankind by allowing the machines to perfect themselves, without providing at the same time some reason for humanity to continue. Then they knew they would have to free the world from the Bureau."

"Well," said Ed-jo, "That sounds easy enough. There are only thirteen members of the Plotbureau; a few hundred readers could easily take over."

There was a moment of silence. "That almost sounds..." began Melu.

"Don't be ridiculous," said Lil-isa.

"We don't want to 'take over'," explained Sven-yorn gently. "Substituting one set of rulers for another helps nothing; the whole history of the Dark Age is the continuous story of a struggle for power. Furthermore, 'taking over' suggests violence—naturally, you didn't have any such thought in mind—and if there is one luxury humanity can never again afford, it is force."

"In a way," said Lil-isa thoughtfully, "the whole system of conditioning, from juvenry to preversity uses force of a kind. No human refuses a

proper order—the Bureau defines ‘proper’ and then so insistently propounds both the statement and the definition that no human dreams of questioning either. Even when it means accepting death long before it would occur in the natural course.”

“But natural death is horrid,” exclaimed Fera-liz.

“How do you know? Only because the audicord told you so, over and over—just as it told you how to use Information, or explained the duties of each classification. It repeated it so often that you never think of questioning it, even when it is in direct opposition to all your instincts. The audicord tells you that man spent his whole life in terror of death until the invention of the Happy Despatch—which comes as a glorious and ecstatic experience at exactly the right moment. You believe the audicord, because it has told you at other times that machines exist only for your good—and that machines cannot be constructed to tell you something harmful.”

“How do you know that what is written in books is true, while what is spoken through the telescreen is false?” asked Ed-jo stubbornly.

“We don’t *know* either of these things. Much that is in books is undoubtedly not true; much that is told us by Information is unquestionably correct. As Readers, we can make a choice between what we believe to be true and what we don’t; as passive receivers of conditioning, we have no choice. If man is not free to choose he is not free at all; if he is not free at all, then it is better he become obsolete and be superseded by the machines.”

“Teach me to read,” said Ed-jo.

**E**D-JO HAD not conditioned well, nor did he learn to read easily. A certain impatience—not entirely free of contempt—tinged his attitude to-

ward his fellow proles. They were too finicky, too hesitant in coming to grips. If they intended to abolish the Plotbureau why didn’t they go ahead and do it, instead of spending so much time talking about it and planning for it?

His impatience was fortified by his increasing realization that the whole structure of society was hollow. The machine appeared to run with utmost smoothness; everything, from permission to reproduce to Happy Despatch went according to plan. Actually, he found, the pattern was a mirage, and had been thus for a long time.

For the Readers had not merely cancelled the intensive conditioning for themselves; they had grasped the illogic at the root of the Plotbureau’s dilemma. They found the inadequacies of the machines, and learned how to create new inadequacies. They became, not machine-tenders as had been intended, but technicians, capable of changing the function of the machines—or, if it suited their purpose, making them distort or lie. It was they, not the Bureau, who held the real power.

It was the Readers who had devised the great safety-valve of planetary exploration, to lead the Plotbureau into justifying continued human existence. They used Information and the planning-cybernets to make the bosses think the idea was their own, and set the inventing, blueprinting and construction machines to work on the exmosphliers.

But the Bureau’s rigidity eventually balked the push of the Readers, arbitrarily labelling Ishards “primitive” and Orsogians “decadent”. This was the excuse for restricting intercourse with them to commence. The Bureau had decreed that Jupiter should be used only for exploiting goochoos, even after it was discovered that beneath the unbreathable atmosphere which showed on the spectro-



scope, there was a mile-high strip of air which would make colonizing simple. Finally the Bureau had declared further exploration of the Solar System pointless, and so sealed the safety-valve the Readers had devised.

None of this new knowledge interested Ed-jo a tenth as much as the discovery that his notion of escaping from the city to the wild country was not so fantastic as he'd thought. In remote spots, communities of Readers existed—unknown to the Bureau or the perpetual census.

"Readers who were prescribed a Happy Despatch and their descendants," he repeated. "I suppose they were smuggled out of the euthanoriums; why aren't non-Readers smuggled out, too?"

"Because non-Readers haven't neutralized their conditioning," explained Lil-isa; "when they're offered escape from the Happy Despatch, they're horrified. They're not only convinced they are going to perfect bliss, but that to evade the decision of a review-board—a machine devised solely for human benefit—would be barbarous."

"By this time there must be a lot of them—wild Readers, I mean."

"There are a lot of free Readers. Since they have no marital-assignments, or reproduction-certificates, their number increases fast. It won't be many years till there are as many people in the communities as the cities. It isn't only the increased birthrate, but natural death at fifty to a hundred, instead of the Happy Despatch at twenty-five or thirty."

"But how do they live? How do they get food, for instance, without hydroponic tanks?"

"They have hydroponic tanks—smaller than those in the buildings, but pretty much the same. They aren't dependent on them though, as we proles are, but enjoy a varied diet—even more varied than those of the upper classifications."

"I don't see what difference it makes," said Ed-jo indifferently. "Food is food. You have to eat to keep alive, and what you eat has to contain the elements necessary to nutrition; beyond that, what does it matter whether it's varied or not?"

LIL-ISA TOSSED her head. "What difference does it make who your marital assignment is? Men are men and women are women; all they need is the necessary vitamins, or genes, or something."

"That's right; what are you looking so mad about?"

"Nothing you could possibly understand. Let's see—where were we?"

"Varied diet."

"Yes. They farm the land, growing food directly in the soil."

"Sounds unsanitary," remarked Ed-jo dubiously.

"They have also learned the ancient art of domesticating animals, so that herds of tamed bison and antelope provide milk and meat. They have small factories for the making of synthetic materials, but they also use many natural ones. They could produce power themselves, but they find it more convenient to tune in on the power-plants of the cities nearest them."

"Doesn't that show up on the tabulators?"

"There are Readers in every assignment, more all the time. Simple adjustments keep the tabulators registering only normal consumption."

"I don't see, with all this activity going on, how they manage to keep their existence secret."

"That's because you don't yet realize how completely isolated the higher classifications are. They depend on Information, and the perpetual census, and other cybernats—which, in turn, are dependent upon such machines as teletectors using radar and sonar. The communities have antison-

ar devices which generally baffle the teletectors; if they fail, the Readers in the cities suppress the data before it gets to the Bureau. Also the inertia of the bosses is profound. Rebellion; Readers; escape from the Happy Despatch; communities in the wild country—none of these are provided for in the scheme of Beaural civilization. Therefore, no one looks for such things—or would believe the rumor of them, unless confronted with the actual fact. Which the Readers take good care they aren't."

"So I suppose the Readers inside will just wait for the time when the communities have grown bigger than the cities to join them and leave the buildings to decay?"

"Why should you suppose that? The cities and the civilization, such as it is, don't belong to the Bureau; they are everyone's inheritance. Not only has history taught us the danger of dividing the world, but if life is valuable—and Readers certainly believe it is—then it wouldn't be right to leave behind us proles and even higher classifications (who might become Readers), for assignment and Happy Despatch instead of a full existence. A new civilization of Readers can't exist side-by-side with the old civilization of the Bureau."

"But when I said the Readers could take over very easily, everybody jumped on me."

"It was silly of us, wasn't it? But you know, to an over-sensitive ear, it almost sounded as though you meant using force. This is not a struggle for power, such as they used to have in the Dark Age. We won't 'take over'; the Bureau will abdicate."

He laughed. "I can just imagine The Boss and the bosses abdicating. Or are the Readers planning to jam the cybernets so that they will recommend a Happy Despatch for all the higher classifications?"

Her look was puzzled, distressed,

angry. "I know you don't mean what you seem to mean, but that odd, atavistic way of talking does give the false impression that you aren't normally horrified of all forms of violence."

Ed-jo shrugged his shoulders. "Jim says there's an ancient proverb: 'All's fair in war...' and something else. Something obsolete. I forget just what," he muttered.

## 5



OR SOME days, the maintenance crew had not been called out. Green Ed-jo oscillated between fits of dogged determination, during which he persisted steadily in his attempt to master the art of reading,

and moods which made him throw the primer aside. He lay on his cot now, looking at neither book nor telescreen.

"Jim!"

"Huh?" The cyclops was deeply absorbed and did not lift his eye from the page.

"Listen: don't you ever wonder if, after all, the Readers are entirely right and the Bureau entirely wrong?"

Will-jim put down his book. "Mean you've suddenly realized utopia won't necessarily materialize fifteen minutes after the Bureau abdicates?"

"For one thing I don't believe the Bureau *will* abdicate. Why should it? Without the bosses and The Boss, without the experience and training of the upper classifications, the proles are helpless. We have no leaders, and the Readers make it a matter of principle to deny the necessity of leadership."

"And you have come to the conclusion that men have to be led for their own good?"

"Hadn't thought of it in those words exactly. I was only realizing that people—especially proles—need direction; otherwise nothing would ever get done. But the way you say it sounds better, maybe. 'For their own good.' Yes. Yes, I do."

Ed-jo paused for a moment, then went on. "I don't know what 'utopia' means, exactly—one of your obsolete words. What I was getting at was something like this: certainly the rule of the Bure means no good for the future of mankind—but what do the Readers intend to substitute for it? Nothing."

"'Nothing' is a big word," said Will-jim thoughtfully, "and I don't think it is exact in this case. So far as the Bureau is anything at all but a useless survival, a museum-piece, a dead weight, the Readers will substitute the human spirit, curiosity, adventurousness, enthusiasm. To substitute nothing for something would be a negative advance; but on the contrary, the Readers propose something for nothing. For the Bureau is nothing, and the routine to which it subjects humanity is mere senseless going through the motion."

"I can't argue with you when you begin talking like that," answered Ed-jo sulkily. "All I know is that without some kind of leadership, nothing will ever get done—"

"What needs to be done so badly that man has to give up his freedom to accomplish it? Only the Bureau blocks the perfection of the machines which could fill all material needs. As for the non-material ones, the Bureau is unaware of their existence; what leadership is required to produce books, paintings, music or new wants?"

Ed-jo continued obstinately as though he had not been interrupted. "All I know is that, without some kind of order, it wouldn't be long before the earth is overrun by Ishards and Orsogians."

"Ah..." Will-jim looked at him contemplatively. "The prospect of extraterrestrial immigration disturbs you?"

"Well, shouldn't it?"

"I think you ought to have a long talk with Isa about it."

**ED-JO**, LIKE a man who has had an unpleasant shock which he still partially disbelieves, looked sullenly at the ground. "I do think someone might have told me these things. Evidently everyone else but me has been let in on the facts."

The aqueduct had suffered a leak far from Lank, many miles to the north, in a wild country quite unlike the wild country he had learned to know. Giant trees grew all around, grew straight up into a thick fog. Their discarded needles, brown, yellowish or gray, padded the earth with a soft, springy cover through which narrow streams of water ran, and lush weeds forced rank leaves. Both Ed-jo and Lil-isa were dressed in lignyon parkas to keep out the cold.

"I don't think you understand." Lil-isa's beautiful, dark face was expressive in the dull air. "One learns as fast as one wishes—no faster. Jim's logic and grasp of history made him wonder why the Bureau was so frightened of the infiltration of inhabitants from other planets. The excuse that we of Isha are backward and primitive, and the people of Orsog decadent, didn't seem to make sense."

"But it does," burst out Ed-jo. "If you are really an Ishard—and I suppose I have to take your word for it, because no one's going to admit themselves humanoid if they aren't—you must be different from other Ishards. I'd never have known if you hadn't told me. And it certainly is a well-known fact the Orsogians are decadent—an old, wornout, senile race. Individual exceptions don't alter the desirability of keeping these humanoids

away from contaminating contact with mankind."

Lil-isa's eyes for the first time seemed alien and perhaps for that reason more beautiful than before. She spoke in a dispassionate voice which did not entirely hide her anger. "Isha's recent origin as an inhabitable planet, far from supporting the Bureau's propaganda that we must necessarily be a primitive species, merely indicates that insufficient time has passed for life of any kind to have developed on Isha."

"If life never developed on Isha then you don't exist. You're something I dreamed up," said Ed-jo with a triumphant laugh.

"There are other ways of life coming to a world besides developing there indigenously, as you yourself ought to know. You come from Jupiter, yet your ancestors didn't evolve from goochs."

"I should say not. My parents were organizers, sent there from earth."

"Exactly; and my ancestors also came from earth. Not as organizers for a thorough exploitation and robbery, or to remake the colonial planet into an image of the mother one with all its faults, but as emigrants, sick of the wars and oppression which seemed inevitable on this globe. In the days of the Emperor Fu-hi, long before the Second Dark Age which your history conditioners ignorantly call *the* Dark Age, long before the civilization of Rome or Greece or Egypt—"

"Jim was telling me something about them," muttered Ed-jo. "A bunch of savages. No machines."

"—there was a highly-advanced culture in the world, occupying a small portion of the globe. These civilized people called themselves the sons of Han. They were surrounded by barbarians who conquered them at intervals, were absorbed into their culture, only to face new assaults from

the outside. Despairing—perhaps too soon—of mankind, my ancestors (many of whose minor inventions like gunpowder, paper-making, printing and so forth, later trickling to the occident, were hailed as colossal strides in the march of progress) built a great number of space ships—"

"Exmosphliers!"

"No. They operated on entirely different principles. Revisiting the earth from time to time to recheck their pessimistic appraisal, they were mistaken generally for natural phenomena—though during the early part of the Second Dark Age they were recognized as vehicles. Into these space ships the sons of Han packed not only those humans willing to undertake the adventure, but seeds of all useful trees and plants known to them; the spawn of fish and pairs of sea animals; beneficial insects; and beasts and fowl. Since they were versed in astronomy they chose Isha as their destination, rather than Orsog—which they believed, quite correctly, to be already inhabited.

"ON ISHA—they got the name from a still older people—they built, literally, a new world, free at last from the threat of barbarism and released from the burden of war. Possibly because of the inexhaustable richness of the Ishard soil, possibly for philosophic reasons, we did not develop a mechanical civilization; or rather we did not build a civilization dependent upon machines, though we have always produced individuals who enjoyed tinkering with gadgets, and constructing new marvels for pleasure and astonishment.

"Perhaps the only disturbing factor in our world was the thought of the planet left behind. We could not, nor did we want to, shake off all responsibility, for those who were, after all of our blood. From time to time our ancient space-ships visited the earth

for observation, only to return with the same grim story: man was incapable as ever of achieving his destiny. There was nothing we could do to help. When the succession of self-made catastrophes which characterized the Second Dark Age culminated in the last orgy of destruction, and reduced the population of the earth to a bare handful, and the survivors sincerely forswore force forever, we had great hopes—only to see them sink as the domination of the Bureau was accepted instead of freedom.

"Hope brightened again when we learned that some proles retained and transmitted the art of reading. We welcomed the first exmosphliers, but the higher classifications who composed the authority on board had no interest in us but a commercial one. Because we worked with our hands, and had long since given up building great cities, they catalogued us as backward and primitive humanoids. It was only when contact was made with proles who turned out to be Readers, that the Ishards saw that our function could be to encourage them and help them change the earth. As a consequence, Readers who were supposed to have had the Happy Despatch came to Isha and not only taught boys and girls all they knew, but rehearsed selected volunteers so exhaustively that we were able to take our places in the buildings as proles without the slightest suspicion."

"Ah," exclaimed Ed-jo.

"Of course Readers fixed the perpetual census, the adjusters, and the troubleshooter so that we were accounted for properly."

"But why?" demanded Ed-jo. "Why couldn't you leave the people of earth to solve their own problems without outside interference?"

"Oh, Jo, Jo—how can you be so thoroughly conditioned? There is collective responsibility and collective guilt in the body of an individual, in

the world, in the universe. If something went wrong with your leg, you wouldn't think of letting it solve its own problems without outside interference from your arms."

Lil-isa paused before going on. "It was through the Readers on board the exmosphliers that we made our first contact with the people of Orsog. Our space ships were capable only of the distance from Isha to earth and return, or one way to Orsog. In spite of this, several expeditions had set out for the red planet, after which nothing was heard of them. We now learned that they had landed safely and been welcomed, but the Orsogians made no attempt to help them return or communicate with us. Orsogian civilization is mechanical, like Earth's, but the Orsogian's long ago eschewed space travel or active communication with other worlds. Our people didn't discover the elements used for refueling on Orsog; it's possible they don't exist there. The Ishards made the best of it, intermarried with the Orsogians. Their descendants are indistinguishable from other inhabitants of the planet, the dark color our skins acquired on Isha bleaching out in a few generations to the paleness characteristic of Orsog."

"And Jim figured all this out for himself?" asked Ed-jo skeptically.

"Of course not. But he made the initial step of questioning the exclusive attitude of the Bureau: from that to deducing that there might be Ishards or Orsogians among the Readers was a short step. Questions brought out the whole story because Jim was ready to learn."

"You don't think I'm ready to learn. Why have you told me all this?"

Lil-isa smiled tenderly at him. "Does it matter why? I could say reasonably enough that we could not afford to let you remain ignorant. Or that your acceptance of the Bureau's

viewpoint about Ishards or Orsogians was hurtful. Or that the Readers have discovered what we Ishards have always known: that all spirit is equally valuable, and no man is to be despised, left behind, sacrificed, used, or deemed inferior. But I would rather say that we Ishards have not been conditioned to suppress or be ashamed of our emotions..."

He looked distrustfully at the lovely dark face. She reached out a tentative hand, then let it drop to her side when he made no attempt to respond.

## 6



THE DAMAGE to the aqueduct at this point was not accidental. The concentration of free Readers in this vicinity was large, and their need for water was great. They could have dug wells, dammed the

river from above the aqueduct to Lank. Conceiving the fruits of civilization to be common property, they saw no reason to do any of these things; it was much easier to hook on to the big pipeline.

They could have fabricated pipe and joined it to the aqueduct. They had machines, and machines to make machines, but their technology had not yet caught up with the cities', nor was there any point in forcing its progress feverishly. There were too many other aspects of civilization, neglected by the Plotbureau, to work on.

So the cybernets had obligingly been tampered with, requisitions put through, and the finished pipe shipped by freightcopter. Again, the free Readers could have put the pipe together by primitive methods; instead

the maintenance crew came to do the job.

"And what will happen when it appears we took a week on a job that should have been finished in a few hours?" asked Ed-jo.

"Nothing," replied Jo-hans. "Because it won't appear; the records will be fixed."

"Everything's coming to depend more and more on cooked records and gummed-up machinery. Suppose we're called on in a real emergency meanwhile?"

"Cooked records again," answered Will-jim. "Morally (remind me to explain this archaic word) indefensible. Another reason for confronting the Bureau with the facts and demanding their abdication as soon as possible."

Fera-liz said abruptly, "Isn't Billyum the most gorgeous hunk of man?"

"Who's Billyum?" asked Lil-isa.

"One of the wild Readers," said Fera-liz. "You missed him when you were out looking into Jo's eyes."

"Where did you pick up this vocabulary, Liz?" inquired Will-jim.

Fera-liz waved four arms lightly. "Boy, I'm hep now; these wild jakes know their scallions."

THE ADJECTIVE "wild" became more understandable as they became better acquainted with Billyum and his companions. The free Readers had an air of assurance, vitality and energy that even the most vigorous urban Readers lacked. They showed a zest which made the cities appear abodes of the dead, in contrast.

For miles around, the wild country had been tamed. Except for forest bands crossing the open ground at intervals, the brush had been cleared and crops were growing: bright green corn, dull green wheat, lush green alfalfa. In the midst of the farmland was the Readers' town.



Although work on the new branch of the aqueduct went on, night and day, the maintenance crew spent much of their time in this town. By Beaural standards, as by ours of today, it was crude. The buildings—they were only three—were less than forty stories high, and their whole area was less than that of the base of the Metro Building at Lank—even though parks, many times wider than the gardens of the metropolis, were laid out between them.

There were no guards, no passwords, no assignments. "I don't understand," said Mei-lu; "without all the machinery of Lank there's more work to be done. How can it be done without order?"

"But we have order," explained Billyum. "We know what there is to do and we do it. Each of us, whether born free or escaped from a Happy Despatch, chooses an occupation to his liking—"

"At what age?" asked Will-jim.

"At any age. Soon as he or she wants to do anything."

"Children?"

"Why not? The ancients rejected child labor because the children were forced to work. With us, a child can choose an occupation and work or play at it. If anything is accomplished, good; if not, nothing is lost."

"Suppose an adult, having chosen an occupation, wants to change?"

"Why then he changes, naturally."

"How often?"

"As often as he likes. Would you expect us to force him to do something distasteful?"

"But suppose he decides not to work at all?"

"That's happened—but never for long. We have no barbituons here to relieve boredom. But even if someone refused to do his share, why should we refuse to feed him, or stigmatize him? But it has never happened."

"Isn't this parcelling out of jobs very haphazard?"

"No more than the selection by machines fumbling with holes in punch-cards. Certainly, if the incidence of Happy Despatches mean anything, it is better suited to humanity."

The food in Sonom—as the Readers' town was called, after an ancient settlement believed to have been located in the vicinity—was strange to the maintenance crew. They were first repelled and then filled with strange feelings of guilt, so that they glanced apprehensively at each other between mouthfuls.

To a great extent what they ate was identifiable to them, but this superficial familiarity only made its foreignness more disturbing. The fruit and vegetables had, except to the deepest scrutiny, the appearance of their hydroponic counterparts; but they also had distinct and individual smells, a different consistency and an almost acrid effect on the tastebuds.

It was the proteins, however, which struck them as being at once offensive and shamefully attractive. The rich, lusty aroma; the closeknit texture requiring the aid of a sharp cutting edge to sever it into edible pieces; the strong, redolent juices oozing out when the cuts were made, were totally unlike the nutritious wafers of dehydrated gouch or synthetic lacticin served in the cities at Nightfeed.

"It's animal," exclaimed Mei-lu suddenly.

"Of course it is," said Billyum. "Buffalo. We've domesticated some of the herd."

"I didn't mean that. I meant the eating of it is animal. Chew, chew, chew; gnaw, gnaw, gnaw; then gulp. As in the ancient books, or history-conditioning."

"We are animals," said Will-jim placidly. "That's what the Bureau has forgotten. Like animals, our instinct is to be free."

NIGHTFEED was very unlike Nightfeed at Lank. Unquestionably partaking of something of the

same quality of communal ritual, it was more leisurely, noisier, and obviously enjoyable rather than solemn. Many of the Readers ate in small, sociable groups, or by themselves, with an open book propped in front of them—a procedure unthinkable in the cities where all partook of food with eyes fixed on the telescreen.

Most eccentric to Ed-jo were the dormitory arrangements. The whole concept of privacy, so cherished by the ancient Anglosaxons, had come under stronger and stronger attack during the Dark Ages until it was regarded as a repulsive atavism. No greater bar to uniformity of thinking—and consequently unanimity of obedience to proper orders—could be conceived than temporary or permanent withdrawal from the sight and sound of others. This was why the prole quarters in the buildings were vast sweeps of empty floors, broken only by the couches set with mathematical regularity and evenness, and the telescreens above, with their vocally-operated controls, set flush like the servadors beside them.

The difference in the accommodations of the Readers, even allowing for their more primitive technology and facilities, was startling. Maritally-assigned men and women (Ed-jo's prudery was still shocked at the thought of voluntary and haphazard marriage; he tried to think of the arrangements decently, as assignments) had walled-off cubicles with doors, to which they retired at night, or whenever the notion struck them. Even their children, indelicately associated with parents long after they should have been in a juvenry, joined in this immodest privacy.

Billyum inquired if any of the three couples desired such a cubicle. Fera-liz giggled and wanted to know if Billyum would share it with her; both Lil-isa and Ed-jo hesitated a perceptible fraction of time before shaking their heads.

For the first time since they had played as children in the Lank Trade-skill Ed-jo hid his thoughts from Will-jim and Fera-liz. Nor did he any longer ask Lil-isa, Jo-hans or Sven-yorn the first questions that came into his head. Now he calculated his speech for the effect it would have on others.

For Green Ed-jo had found a viewpoint which was both positive and his own. The spectacle of the embryonic Readers' society convinced him that their philosophy was basically wrong. While there was no doubt in his mind that the rule of the Bureau was inefficient and deleterious, at the same time it seemed to him that neither the method nor the goals of the Readers was calculated to achieve an overwhelming improvement.

The Readers were right in wishing to solve the Plotbureau's dilemma by freeing men from all work which could be done by machines; as for the substitution of creative, or speculative, activity Green Ed-jo was dubious, being unable to conceive exactly what forms such activity would take. He thought it would undoubtedly be more practical for mankind, released from drudgery, to go adventuring and colonizing—really colonizing, this time—through the solar system as once they had over the face of the earth. But for this, or for any other way of life which Ed-jo could visualize as desirable, order was needed. And in spite of Billyum's arguments and his companions' concurrence, order to Ed-jo meant centralized planning, and leadership. Both were needed too for the job of replacing the Bureau, for it seemed to him ridiculous to think, as the Readers did, that the bosses would just gracefully yield their power.

Power was the key. You could misuse power as the Bureau undoubtedly did, or not use it at all as the Readers proposed. But misused or unused, power existed. It could be used for good. In ancient times men had arisen with burning visions of an ordered world.

The history books and the telecorders' conditioning were agreed in calling them bad and evil men. Perhaps they were, but the idea of leadership and order were not bad or evil. Power itself was neither good nor bad; only the way it was used. If, when the Readers bumbled and muddled and failed, and a leader arose to straighten out the affairs of mankind with a strong and sure hand—

It was conceivable that that leader could be someone like Green Ed-jo.

It was conceivable the leader could be Green Ed-jo.

**B**Y BIT the pretense of subservience to the Bureau crumbled. Readers from the outside came and went in Lank at will. These were the very individuals who had been recommended a Happy Despatch and who supposedly, after a week of wild debauch with instruments of dissipation which had not known any other use for generations, had been reduced to dust and blown into the atmosphere along with other dried and powdered waste. Conditioned proles were frequently startled to see evidence of the forgotten theological doctrine of resurrection.

This same increasing carelessness applied to tampering with the machines: records of power-consumption were not always adjusted precisely to account for diversion to the Readers' communities; projects were embarked upon without previously faking assignments. The Readers behaved as though they were daring the Bureau to discover their doings.

Sven-yorn admitted as much. "We want the bosses to learn gradually that their dominance is illusory and that the machines which govern mankind are not only fallible but subject to us whenever we wish them so. For if they were to find out the true state of affairs all at once, the shock might stiffen their resistance and cause unhappy complications. By allowing

suspicion to develop into knowledge we make it easier for them to take the next step—resignation."

"But by giving them warning, you allow them time to prepare to resist the change," argued Ed-jo.

"What can they do?" asked Sven-yorn. "Issue orders? The Readers will not obey them, for they have neutralized their conditioning. The proles still conditioned to obey will never hear them, for Readers will block their transmission. The same thing applies to reassignments, or review-boards which would recommend Happy Despatches. No, no; the only preparation the bosses can make is to become proles."

"Just sort of drift into a new society?"

"Not exactly. We have already tampered with the perversity conditioning; our next step is to see to the issuance of unlimited permits to reproduce. Then comes the change in the system of marital assignments—"

"Wow!" exclaimed Fera-liz.

"Funny thing's been happening lately," commented Jo-hans. "There seems to have been an inexplicable increase in food-consumption among the higher classifications."

"Maybe they've taught their robots to eat," giggled Mei-lu.

**W**HEN THE inexplicable was explained, the Readers found no amusement in it. One morning, during Firstfeed, there appeared on all the telescreens the presentation of a bulky figure reclining on a couch.

"This is Smid Jor-al, Boss of Lank, The Boss. I am speaking to all the people of the earth. I advise you, in-subordinate so-called Readers, not to interfere with this broadcast. This advice is for your own good, because any interference will automatically result in disaster—as you will soon see.

"You are misled, and are misleading yourselves. You would abolish the Plotbureau, level all classifications, do

away with assignments, end the Happy Despatch. You think that that way lies freedom. You are wrong; that way lies overpopulation, anarchy, and a return to the miseries and wretchedness our ancestors suffered. Believe me, you cannot tamper with the structure of civilization—and the Bureau represents the only real, thorough and secure civilization man has ever known—without bringing the whole building down on you.

"However, I know this isn't the moment for argument or reason. My time is short and some foolish individual may make it even shorter at any moment by disconnecting me. I will therefore stick to facts. In a few minutes, all the power will go off and the world will be helpless and stagnant; since your parasitical communities of Readers are also dependent on the power generated in the cities they will be unable to come to your assistance.

"We of the Plotbureau are quite aware that you are capable of restoring the power; we are not as foolish as you seem to think. Yes, you could turn the power back on seconds after I shut it off. Incidentally it is now adjusted to go off negatively; that is, I don't have to give an affirmative command, but merely to stop talking. An interval of silence will work the relays. That is one of the reasons it would be unwise to cut me off before I've finished.

"But when the power is off do not, I beg you, be so foolish as to restore it except by our consent. For when the power goes back on—unless the correct password is fed to the master-controls on Information—that invaluable cybernet will destroy itself. It has been so adjusted.

"I need hardly point out, even to the unintegrated, what a calamity the destruction of Information would be. All the accumulated knowledge of mankind would vanish instantly. Even if it were possible to reconstruct it out of those books in which you take

such pride—and it is not, for so many books have been lost, and so much knowledge has been achieved since Information was built—it would take years, if not generations. You could not hope to continue as anything more than primitive anthropoids without Information.

"We of the upper classifications have been storing food for a long time against this day. We shall only suffer inconvenience while the power is off; you, however, will be helpless.

"When you are ready to give up your insubordination we will let you have the word to use on the controls of Information. Some of you may argue that it would be clever to deceive us—to pretend submission and then repudiate your surrender when Information functioned again. We have anticipated this by providing for follow-up passwords at various time-intervals, without which destruction will then take place. Your only choice is to give in—sincerely.

"Since the shutting off of power will cut communications between us, you will have to find another means of letting us know your submission beside the telescreen, elevator, or helicopter. How you will get together to decide among yourselves of the inevitability of capitulation I have no idea, since the elevators won't run nor the electronic doors open with the power shut off. As for communication between the cities, that is obviously out of the question. So it will remain with you of Lank to submit for all of you; during the daylight hours, one of us will be at a window facing the aerial gardens on the same side as the main entrance to the Beaural Building. Perhaps the Readers who are so ready to run the world will find a way to get out there from the books they value so highly. They may also find the answer to the food problem, which doubtless will become pressing in a day or so—except for those few now

in the same room with hydroponic tanks or meal-processors.

"But I digress, for the subject has been pleasant. Assuming that you get together, or that your leaders are on ground level (and able in some way to get through the entrance doors) you will rig up some kind of white flag—this will appeal to your archaeological enthusiasms, your taste for antique—so we can see it. We will then transmit to you the password. It will require a little ingenuity to figure out, and you will not be absolutely sure of the correctness of your interpretation until you have staked everything on it—but this is the penalty for dedicating yourselves to the good of mankind instead of filling the duties of your assignments. The power will now go off."

The sardonically-smiling face of Smid Jor-al remained on the tele-screens for ten seconds. Then they went blank.

At the same moment, the lights went off.

7



THE CONFUSION of voices, rising and falling in the dusky gloom, which appeared darker than it was because of its suddenness and strangeness, finally resolved itself into two elements. The loudest and sharpest

came from proles in panic, hysterically demanding that something be done right away; berating the Readers for their senseless sedition; crying that the air-conditioning was off, and they would suffocate; complaining that they could not see.

The calmer voices, rising now and then in exasperation, were those of the Readers, urging quiet, shouting

that there was nothing to fear, that even though the conditioning was off air was still entering from the vents. As for seeing, as soon as eyes became accustomed, the light coming through the windows—though dim, except within fifty meters or so—was nevertheless strong enough even in the center to allow them to make out and recognize objects and people. There was no cause for panic; everything would be taken care of.

"Will it?" muttered Green Ed-jo; "I wonder."

In spite of the reassurances of the Readers there was a heavy, stunning sense of helplessness in the air. Conditioning had established the image of the Plotbureau as a benevolent overseer, existing only to further the well-being of mankind, without whose wise and experienced direction civilization would collapse. Now, suddenly this paternal figure showed itself in wrath, withdrawing its support and comfort from its dependents, leaving them in dark, terrified anxiety. Even the Readers, quite apart from their position of responsibility, knew the quaking feeling of uneasiness.

"If I'd had any sense I'd have ordered a thermosuit while Smid was speaking," came Fera-liz' voice. "I'm getting goose-pimples from the cold."

"Imagination," said Will-jim; "the temperature couldn't have fallen half a degree yet."

In the gloom, Ed-jo saw Lil-isa close beside him. Almost without volition he reached toward her. Each leaned; their lips touched. It was an unfamiliar gesture; kissing was not customary in Beaural civilization.

It was Ed-jo who pulled away first. "Now that the Readers have lost out," he said harshly, "one of the first things the Bureau will probably do is search out all you Ishards and send you back where you came from."

"What makes you think the Readers have lost?" she asked calmly.

"What makes you doubt it?" he re-

torted. "What else are they to do but give in? With their altruism, and concern for the welfare of all humanity, they certainly won't allow Information to be destroyed. Nor will they let the proles starve while they try to figure out some way to improve their position."

"Don't be so pessimistic," put in Johans. "I bet right now the Readers in the powerhouse are planning how to get things going again."

"That's the trouble with the whole setup. Everybody depending on everybody else; no direction, no leader at the top, no secrets; everything wide open and vulnerable."

"And how would you manage if you were the leader you think so essential?" inquired Sven-yorn.

"Why, I would have—"

"Would-haves are no use now. What would you do from here on?"

"Well," began Ed-jo, "I'd turn the tables on the upper classifications. Starve them out."

"They may have food and water for a week, a month, or a year. Whatever period it is, the proles would be starved out first."

ED-JO ALMOST argued, "Sometimes you have to sacrifice a part for the good of the whole; let the weaker proles succumb, and the stronger survive to rule the world." But he held the words back. The Readers, with their sentimentality, would not agree with this sensible approach. Instead he said, "The proles needn't starve; it's a simple matter of transporting the food from the hydroponic tanks, or the processors, to them—or better, them to the food. As for water, it is right here in the pipes; since the outlets don't work on word of command with the power shut off, we'll just break off the outlets and substitute some kind of plug."

"I'm afraid you don't see the difficulties," contended Will-jim. "No doubt, Readers down below with ac-

cess to metal are already constructing makeshift hand tools on the ancient model. In time, they could make some kind of ladders or stairways which would reach us up here on the eighty-fifth floor and higher. But it couldn't be done in an hour or a day—maybe not even in a week. By that time we would have lost great numbers from sickness spread by the sewage, no longer carried off, since the flushing mechanism requires power to operate at verbal command. As for the simple device of breaking off the water outlets, you forget that none of the water used in Lank comes to us by force of gravity; many power-pumps lift it. Even if these things could be solved here, what of the eleven other cities? Are we to try and save ourselves while letting their proles die?"

"You intend to surrender, then?"

"No, we intend to think, to reason," said Sven-yorn. "We have time for that, even though we haven't time for wild adventures."

"There's a time for thought, and a time for action," muttered Ed-jo.

"Exactly. Thought comes first; action later. We have several advantages which the Bureau doesn't. We have choice, which the Bureau deprived itself of when it turned off the power. The gamble is theirs, not ours: they have everything to lose; we can, at worst, only gain less than our full object. They can do nothing now but wait for our decision; we have many alternatives, even after surrender is ruled out. We can, I hope, figure out some way to circumvent the Bureau's move. Or we can turn on the power and allow Information to destroy itself. Terrible as the loss would be, it would not be as bad as The Boss stated; it would not be irreparable for generations. We could continue without it, though the Bureau could not. Or we could attempt to bargain."

"Bargain! What have you to offer them?"

"Let me go on listing some of our



advantages first. We alone can restore the power now; it can no longer be done verbally. Even if the Bureau were able to reach the machines from the five-hundredth floor, unless the power is already on nothing changes the audible pattern into a mechanical one. If we are faced by an ultimatum from the Bureau, the Bureau is faced by helplessness without us.

"Then we can, thanks to literacy, communicate among ourselves, at least so far as the Readers in Lank are concerned. The Bureau is limited to those within sound of each others' voices. We have access to a great body of knowledge in books; the Bureau has only the odds and ends in its collective memory, without Information. Perhaps most important of all, we have definite objectives in mind; the Bureau's sole purpose is to attempt restoration of conditions, not as they were, but as its members imagine they used to be. Everything is on our side."

"I'm cold," announced Mei-lu. "If everything is on our side please get me a thermosuit right away."

**T**HERE WAS no question now that the temperature had fallen. Nor was this due solely to the absence of air-conditioning, for Readers close to the windows had succeeded in making holes in the plexiglass in order to see out.

"Time is passing; the few hours we have are being used up and you do nothing but talk," burst out Ed-jo. "Action: I want to see some action!"

Someone at a window shouted, "They're doing something down below. Can't make out what it is—too far."

"See," said Sven-yorn; "action and calculation at the same time. Now back to considering the situation: The Boss promised a password to protect Information when we got the power on, providing we surrendered.

This must mean the Bureau has devised some means of communicating with us from the five hundredth floor. Now they cannot come down to us, nor can we reach them, since neither the elevators nor the copters will run. It is unlikely any of the upper classifications have learned to read and write, just to communicate a single word—so unlikely that I think we can rule it out."

He paused, then went on. "I have read that in ancient times messages were sent from one part of a building to another by tapping on pipes or walls. It is hardly probable the bosses have this bit of information; but even if they did, or figured it out for themselves, it would still leave the problem of our understanding their message—a code held in common, which we don't possess. I think we can rule that out as well."

From the window a prole said, "I still can't make out what they're doing; but whatever it is, others at the windows on the first few floors are in on it."

Sven-yorn continued, "The apparent plan would seem to be to throw some easily-identifiable object from the window. The name of the object would be the password."

"That's logical," agreed Jo-hans.

"All right. An object—not too small, lest it be lost in falling nearly a mile. This pretty well excludes anything which could have been delivered through a servador and kept in readiness."

"But not something which could have been taken up in an elevator or brought down from the roof ahead of time," objected Lil-isa.

"Right." Sven-yorn was silent for a moment. "I hadn't thought of that. Truth is, I had a pet theory and was trying to fit everything into it. I was sure they would throw a robot from the window and that 'Robot' was bound to be the key word. Now... Well, it could be almost anything."

"Look here," interrupted Ed-jo, "I'm sick of all this chatter that gets us nowhere. Let me go and talk to the Bureau face-to-face."

"There's only two things wrong with that," commented Sven-yorn; "the first is, you can't get there; the second is you have nothing to say to the bosses."

"You're half wrong anyway," corrected Mei-lu. "Jo can reach the five hundredth floor easily enough."

"I don't know how easy it would be, but I think I could do it. Anyway, I'd like to try."

**W**ILL-JIM explained Ed-jo's peculiarity, adding, "Why can't he point out that the Bureau has overreached itself by shutting off the power? That since they are dedicated to efficiency and profitable activity, this move of theirs thwarts their own purposes. They no longer direct the world; in actuality the Readers have been doing this for some time; they would be better off to accept the fact and work with us instead of against us."

Fera-liz murmured to no one in particular, "If they weren't so mean about marital-assignments, I'm sure everything would be all right and everybody would be happy."

"I don't suppose any of the bosses know about Jo," reflected Lil-isa. "In ordinary circumstances (if you can imagine ordinary circumstances in which a prole would come in contact with the Bureau) it would be regular procedure to query the social adjuster or the perpetual census before even talking to him. Now he will appear as just another prole without obvious mutations. Perhaps he could bluff them; let them think the Readers have another source of power which enabled him to reach them. There were self-contained units long ago weren't there?"

"Right," agreed Will-jim. "Very awkward and wasteful, but they

worked part of the time. As a matter of fact, if we had time, we could duplicate such engines and starve the Bureau out."

"I don't know," said Sven-yorn slowly. "It seems to me they would question our having power; why wouldn't we have used it in other, more obvious ways?"

"There could be lots of reasons," argued Mei-lu. "First things first, you know. Besides, even if they wonder, how are they going to get around the fact that Jo is actually up there?"

"Well," finally agreed Sven-yorn, "I suppose if they *think* we have power it's just as good, from a bargaining point of view, as if we had it. It may be worth a chance."

From the window came the news, "They're trying to rig up what looks like some kind of hoist. Work it by hand. Anyway they're raising it higher all the time by throwing something from a window to the one above, pulling up a gear..."

Ed-jo didn't hear the rest of the report; Lil-isa was whispering, "I'm scared. Suppose you should fall?"

He laughed boastfully. "Me fall? That's a good one. You talk as though you'd never seen me clear a tree with one jump. Why, if I did fall, it'd be so slowly I'd catch hold of something before I went far. Don't be scared for me; just worry about some of the airy notions the Readers have, now that I have a chance to show what I can do."

"What do you mean?"

"Oh, nothing."

He saw her doubtful, anxious look; then he kissed her for the second time. He made his way to the window, pushing aside the watchers without explanation, and swung out through the opening. The sudden prickling under his skin was not fear, but cold; it seemed frightfully cold outside. *If I only had any of the hundreds of thermosuits I've thrown so carelessly in the disposers*, he thought, *I'd never*

*give it up again, but cherish it for the rest of my life.*

He clung to the broken plexiglass and looked down to the great base of the Metro Building. There was a crowd there and he was almost sure some of them were clothed. It would be possible to get back in, write a message, and have one of the suits relayed up. But this would entail delay and explanation, neither of which appealed to him. He shivered again, saw that those below were frantically busy with their project of connecting the vertical line of windows by tossing ropes upward, and bent his head back to look up.

IT WAS only fifteen floors to the first terrace; this would be the easiest part of his climb. The window above had a hole in it, someone was leaning out watching him. "Hang on tight," Ed-jo shouted; "I'm going to have to grab hold of your arm."

The prole looked down puzzledly as Ed-jo bent his knees and let his hams rest on his heels while he hung on with one hand over his head. Then, tensing his muscles, he sprang, giving his body the final push upward with his feet on the plexiglass.

He flew in a slight arc and caught the surprised watcher's arm, almost pulling him through the window. "Hey!" exclaimed the startled prole.

"It's all right," said Ed-jo, releasing the arm and taking a grip on the plexiglass. "Coming up!"

He repeated the jump exactly, again catching an astonished arm, and took off without pause a third time. He was warm now, and exultant; this was going to be easy.

A few floors higher he paused, panting. There was no figure in the window above nor, as far as he could see, a hole in the plexiglass. "What's on the next floor?" he asked his momentary host.

"Next floor?" The face gaped stupidly. "I don't know."

He knew he would face this problem many times before he reached the roof; indeed, after the terrace atop the hundredth floor it would be only by rare chance he found a window with a hole or a watcher. The next leap would merely be the first in a long series; he might as well evolve the technique early.

The windows were practically flush with the quonium girders between them. There were no unfunctional sills, only the narrowest of projections above to divert some of the rain. The automatic window-cleaners, mere vertical slits with a slight outward flare from which a forced blast of chemical solution followed by warm air was directed against the surface of the plexiglass, seemed to offer no help at all.

"Whatever it is, either there's no one there, or whoever is hasn't any curiosity."

"Where are you going?" asked the prole—a little belatedly, Ed-jo thought.

"Roof. I've business with the Plot-bureau. Guess it's the window-cleaners for me after all."

"What? I don't get you."

But Ed-jo had already made his leap. His fingers found the flare and he clung, but there was no hold for his feet, nothing on which to brace himself for the next jump. Disappointed and humiliated, he dropped back to the floor below. If there were only some other way of getting up, just so he could avoid the disgrace of acknowledging how idle his boasts had been.

"Something wrong?" asked the prole at the window.

Ed-jo swallowed his exasperation. "Everything. I've got to think. Give everything for a hammer or an ax."

The prole said casually, "Be just the same to you to come inside to think? My arm's getting kind of tired from your hanging on to it."

Ed-jo laughed apologetically. "Sorry.

Sure." The hole was too small for him to squeeze through; he tore out shards of the plexiglass to enlarge it.

"Some muscle," remarked the prole admiringly. Ed-jo looked at him sharply, but his face was open and sincere. Evidently, the conditioning which was supposed to instill revulsion against physical exertion had either been unsuccessful or had been overcome.

As his pupils dilated, he saw that this was one of the factory floors; a series of long conveyor-belts, glass-enclosed, ran parallel along the floor. Between the rows were the couches, telescreens, servadors and disposers of those who ministered to the machines. The proles gaped at him with uneasy curiosity. They were all shivering from the unaccustomed contact with the normal temperature of the outside air.

"What's made here?"

"Thermosuits. This is the finishing-department. If we only had some way to get at them—"

"Why don't you break the glass?"

"With what—our hands? The belts are enclosed in triple safety-glass; the machinery is fully automatic; we can detect imperfections through the glass and make adjustments, but we can't touch the finished product."

Ed-jo shrugged. His hope of finding a heavy object that he could swing on a rope ahead of him to break the windows above as he climbed would not be fulfilled here. He glanced at the shivering proles and proclaimed loudly, "It's going to be all right. I'm on my way up now to tell the bosses they can't get away with this."

**H**E WAS not entirely sure the answering murmur was respectful. Hurriedly, Ed-jo added, "All I need is some way of getting a foothold on one window in order to jump to the next."

They looked at him uncomprehendingly. Finally the prole who had been at the window asked, "Why don't you follow the line of windows where the air-intakes are?"

"Air-intakes?"

"Sure. Where the fresh air comes in for conditioning."

Ed-jo felt deflated and foolish. "You know where they are?" he asked humbly.

"About ten windows over, I think. Can't tell from the inside."

He broke out the indicated plexiglass. "Don't see any sign."

He withdrew his head and the prole looked out. "Next one over."

This was already broken; Ed-jo enlarged the hole and climbed out. The intake-vents were inconspicuous, streamlined downcurving prisms, offering the barest minimum of dubious, slippery foot-hold. Nevertheless he was elated to feel the slight ridge beneath his toes; no normal, Earthborn man could possibly have used it as a leverage.

He bent his knees and sprang upward. His fingers caught in the cleaning-vents of the window above; his feet found the next intake. "This is going to be a cinch," he exclaimed aloud.

A few more leaps brought him over the parapet and on to the terrace of the hundred and first floor. Without pause he began scaling the cliff of the fifty stories to the next setback.

## 8



**N**LY RARELY now were there broken windows with watchers framed in them. The illusion that four hundred leaps was a mere arithmetical extension of one was thoroughly dissipated before Green Ed-jo reached the hundred and tenth floor. The pads of his fingers were swollen and bruised; soon they would become numb and bleeding. In spite of his re-

istance to the gravity of Earth, his body ached with the effort.

With each jump, the notion that there was an easier way to reach the top fixed itself more firmly in Ed-jo's mind. No matter how often he considered it, discussed its illogic with himself and dismissed it, it persisted, ever stronger and more nagging. Surely the elevator-shafts... It did no good to tell himself that there was no way of breaking into the shafts, through power-operated doors now adamantly closed, even though he was sure there was no advantage to be gained even if he got inside. The picture of a jammed door, just one in all the multiple banks, in five hundred floors, attained the proportion of a feverish hallucination. If he could only find that jammed door...

The obsession made him stop frequently to pound with a futile fist on unyielding plexiglass as he clung precariously with the other hand and the faint toe-hold. But his hammering had not sufficient force to crack the tough compound.

The second terrace—that of the hundred and fifty-first floor—was at once a glorious, unbelievable achievement and a devastating premonition of failure. It had taken his full endurance to get so far; it was impossible to believe that he could climb three hundred and fifty more stories.

When his breathing had returned almost to normal and he ceased being conscious of the hammering of his heart, he staggered over the width of the terrace and fell against a window. Hardly aware of what he was doing, urged by the obsession which had plagued him through his climb, he beat his fists on the plexiglass, heedless of bruises.

If he had not been half-dazed, the pain would have made him stop before the window fractured; as it was he persisted until the material yielded and broke, sagging inward. Tearing at the

obstinate stuff, he finally climbed inside.

In a tiny cubicle, barely large enough to accommodate the oversize couch, the bodies of a man and a woman lolled bonelessly. An overpowering, sweetish, sickening smell lay heavily on the air. Ed-jo gagged at it, attempted to control his nausea, and leaning out the broken window, failed.

He had no idea whether the bodies were alive or dead. His primary thought was to get away from the horrible stench, out into the untainted air. But he had caught sight of food, unfamiliar, broken and scattered, but nevertheless recognizably food, on the couch and floor. He was without appetite; indeed the idea of eating was revolting, but on a purely intellectual plane he knew that it was essential for him to gather up some of the scraps. Food was going to be a scarce and precious commodity.

Back on the terrace at last, his hands filled with the odds and ends of a meal, he breathed deeply and reflected on the scene he had just quitted. There was no doubt the room was part of a complex—unquestionably the final part—wherein the Happy Despatch was given to its nominees. He could not classify the smell as that of stale alcohol or opium, but he knew instinctively that it represented a force which had robbed the two of their sensitivity and normal fears before drugging them with vivid, pervasive dreams. Only the shutting off of the power had interrupted the climax, which undoubtedly would have been the introduction of a lethal gas followed by incineration and automatic disposal of the remains.

Reflections on the grisly aspects of the Happy Despatch were out of place at the moment. It was essential for him to concentrate on the unexpectedly found food and the climb. He put a handful of the broken meats into his mouth.

The astonishing thing was not that it was totally unlike the scientifically-balanced rations which were dispensed from the servadors at Firstfeed or Nightfeed—Ed-jo expected this. What surprised him was that he had tasted similar food before—at the settlement of the Readers. The very appetites which the subjects of the Bureau were intensively conditioned to shrink from and regard as obscene were those catered to in the deathly feast which was supposed to mark the zenith of human ecstasy.

He crammed the last of the food in his mouth and rose to tackle the hundred and fifty-second floor.

ON THE terrace of the four hundred and fifty-first story, Ed-jo fell face-downward, his nostrils clogged with the sulphury odor of suffocation, his lungs gasping harshly for the sand-papery breath that hurt his mouth and throat, his heart slamming itself, terrified, against his ribs. It was no longer a source of pride—it had not been for long, long hours—to reflect that half the strain would have burst the heart and lungs of an ordinary man, one who had not miraculously adapted himself in the womb to the gravitational pull of Jupiter. Ordinary or extraordinary, he was through; he could go no further.

The Readers would have to surrender now: he could not make that final fifty floors to the roof. His half-formed vision of a new world, midway between the hopeless rigidity of Beaural inertia and the irresponsible, directionless goal of the Readers, with himself as founder and mediator, would have to die before it ever reached the embryonic stage. Wretched, he fell into a gasping doze of exhaustion.

When he jerked into wakefulness it was dark and miserably cold. He shivered, groaned, looked up at the looming bulk above and at the icy stars. The wind seared his flesh, he *had* to climb now, if only to get warm.

His muscles protested as he sprang for the window; fear shook him as he realized that he could not see the vents and had to trust to chance and touch. He clung to the four hundred and fifty-second floor in despair and terror.

Ten stories higher, Ed-jo missed the vents entirely and fell back, clutching desperately. The smooth curves eluded him; with panic he visualized his smashed body on the terrace below. Then he caught and held on to the window washing-slits, utterly beaten.

He could perhaps break a window and crawl in to whimper and twitch in shame and defeat. That he was now in the domain of the top classifications, and that he would be faced by an implacably hostile presence didn't seem to make a difference one way or the other. The ancient—it must be ancient, for he remembered it vaguely as something out of the distant past—obsession of the jammed elevator-door flitted across his mind. What...what... Oh, yes...break open a window... It seemed almost as great an effort as to order his cramped limbs to jump again.

Now the sweeping overhang of the roof loomed above, hiding the stars. From this great projection the threads that were the bileways webbed out toward the other buildings. To reach the edge of this exaggerated cornice was impossible.

Impossible... The whole adventure was impossible from the start. He had known of the overhang and calculated a way of surmounting it. What had it been?

He made the last jump to the top window just under the jutting platform. He hammered at the surface with one hand—hammering, hammering, hammering. Nothing gave; the plexiglas was impregnable.

Suddenly he found he was no longer pounding; his fist had gone through. Dazedly he enlarged the hole and climbed in. Then he stood trembling

for long minutes before he collapsed on the floor.

INSTEAD of sinking into unconsciousness, Green Ed-jo found his mind working feverishly. If he were lucky, he would find himself in a hangar, with a ramp giving directly on the roof. Standing shakily he began walking slowly, with hands out before him to avoid stumbling against a stored helicopter.

Instead he came abruptly against a smooth wall stretching blankly ahead. He had evidently entered on one of those corridors, a feature unknown on the lower floors, which gave access only to the banks of elevators and the escalator to the roof. He realized now that no window giving on the hangar would have vents—hangars were not airconditioned.

A corridor meant electronically-operated doors. His impossible climb had terminated in another impossibility. Ironical, implacable corridor! There was no point in attempting anything further.

No longer afraid of stumbling over an obstacle, he walked ahead, fingertips against the wall. The darkness was absolute; at no point was there any impression of light, however faint.

He walked for what seemed an interminable time, and a distance, which should surely have brought him past the doors and close to the other end of the hall. Even as he told himself that time and space multiplied to his senses in the dark, he realized with sudden dismay that he should have been able all along to see the faint glimmer from the window at the opposite end of the corridor. There was none. There never had been any.

He knew that all Beaural architecture was precisely symmetrical. Each setback was balanced by others, at exactly the same distance apart; no corridor ended in an unfunctional cul-de-sac. It was impossible that there

should be a hall with a window at one end without one at the other.

In spite of the cold, Ed-jo felt his hair prickle with sweat. He turned his head back to gauge the distance from the window into which he'd climbed. It was no longer visible.

Absurd. No matter how far he had come he should be able to see some trickle of light behind him. Was it conceivable that this was some trick of the Bureau's? That he had somehow stumbled into a trap? In panic he began running, then saw ahead, not far off, the faint light of moon and stars.

More disturbed than ever, he approached warily. Somehow, inconceivably, he must have got turned around— But even as he formulated the theory he knew it was invalid, it did not take the unbroken plexiglas to confirm it. This was—even though it could not be—the window at the other end of the corridor.

His knees went weak with relief as he finally understood: The corridor was curved.

Ed-jo leaned against the wall, feeling his heartbeat slowly return to normal. Then he realized he was no nearer his goal of the doorway; it had eluded his fingertips as they felt along the curving wall.

And of course it would, just as the elevator-openings would. All doors were smooth and flush, machined precisely to show no crack, give no hint of their presence. With the power on, the approach of a person or a robot would activate the electronic eyes which would then drone, "Elevator going down, please call for a car," or, "Escalator to the roof; please give the password in order to exit." There was no need of any visual indicators when they were replaced by audible ones.

Well, he must figure out the location of the doors without anything to go by except logic, neither touch, taste, smell, sight nor hearing would help.



Stop and think. Think hard, for everything depended on his thought.

Symmetry. He was pretty sure there was only one set of doors leading to the escalators from each corridor. That must mean they would be placed in the exact center. If he paced off the distance from window to window, and then retraced exactly half of it, he would come to the doors. What would happen then—would happen then.

ED-JO DECIDED to guide himself along the other wall, the one with the concave curve; he was convinced it was in this that the doors were. Very carefully, he placed his right heel snugly in the rounded corner where the floor joined the wall under the window. For the last time he reminded himself that his paces must be full—the total stretch of his legs—this would be the only way he could make them approximately even.

"One...two...three..." It was absolutely essential to count out loud, firmly and with full attention. Otherwise he might miss, or count one twice over. "Twenty-six...twenty-seven..." Why had he been so sure the doors were on the outer curve? "Forty-four..."

"A thousand, two hundred and three...thousand, two hundred four..." Endless, endless, infinite curve. The opposite window jumped into sight. "Thousand, two hundred sixteen...thousand, two hundred sev—" Crack! His foot hit his goal in the middle of an uncompleted pace.

A thousand, two hundred sixteen and a half. Half of that was... Ordinarily he would have gone to the nearest telescreen and asked Information; now, having to do the simple operation in his head, he wished he had been more respectful of the books and methods of the Readers.

Six hundred eight and a fraction paces back. And if he had miscounted, or varied the paces... He shut his mind and strode on.

The wall halfway between the windows—if it really was halfway; if his paces had been equal and his arithmetic correct—seemed no different in composition or texture. Tapping produced no variation in echo. Desperately he rammed his shoulder against it, knowing how futile the effort was.

Again and again. Ed-jo drew back, panting. Could the doors be on the other side after all? Or a few feet to one side or the other? Was he bruising himself on unyielding quinium? Or was it simply impossible, as both his common-sense and scraps of knowledge told him, even for one with Jupiter-born strength to force a mechanism constructed to be impervious to anything but the sound of the password to which it was set?

Again he tried and this time he thought he felt something give. Was his imagination playing tricks? Driving the battered shoulder in spite of uncontrollable wincing, he crashed with all his might. This time there was no doubt he had found the doors and was forcing them open. Forcing? The persistent vision of jammed mechanisms that had haunted him on his climb had materialized at long last.

The night air chilled his sweat as he climbed the petrified escalator. Now all he had to—

"Give the password please," ordered a guard.

Ed-jo almost laughed at the absurdity of it. "Listen, idiot: the power has been shut off by the Bureau, the whole world is waiting to learn if this social system will survive or if we'll have a different one—and you ask me for the password. Just as if you weren't cold and hungry and scared yourself." "Orders are orders; no one is allowed on the roof without the password."

"Well, I don't know it. And I don't give a damn for it."

The guard said stiffly, "I shall have to detain you until the power goes back

on, and I can get instructions from the social adjuster."

"Suppose I refuse to be detained?"

"I don't understand?"

"Oh, it's quite simple; I'll just walk past you."

"But you can't do that. I'm detaining you by instructions of the Plot-bureau."

Ed-jo began walking toward the roofedge.

"You can't do that. No one can refuse to obey a Beaural order."

"Can't they? Well I am doing it." Ed-jo turned his back on the guard and surveyed the darkness that was Lank. He did not realize, till this moment, how much he depended on the now silent tele-formers. He knew the direction of his goal, but without the mechanically activated voice repeating, "This is the bileway to the Beaural Building," it was hard to decide which of the three viaducts spanning outward was the one he wanted.

His straining eyes were bothered by a dim, lowhanging star before he recognized that it was not a star at all, but a light. An artificial light; not low in the sky, but high in a building. How foolish he had been not to understand that the bosses' preparations for the shutdown of power must have included some means of illumination. And warmth too, no doubt, he thought, shivering angrily.

With the dismayed shouts of the guard still urging him to return and be detained, he set out of the bileway which must lead to the light. As nearly as he could reckon, it was about four miles to the Beaural Building. A jee-car could make it in a couple of minutes, but jee-cars like everything else depended on transmitted power.

He had never noticed before that the bileways swayed and swung in the wind. It gave him a momentary queasy feeling to think of the ground a mile below with nothing but the deceptively slender ropes of woven metal support-

ing him. One never bothered over such things in the swift progress of a jee-car.

## 9



REEN ED-JO began running. The greater part of his journey was done; the insurmountable obstacles had been surmounted; what remained was trivial. And he was the only man in the world who could have accomplished it. Not Will-jim with his hoarded scraps of ancient knowledge, nor Sven-yorn, smugly satisfied in his wisdom. Not the Readers with their aspirations, nor the bosses with their power. Not Lil-isa, dark provocation from an alien world. Only he.

The light ahead was not a single one, but several in a row, coming from near the roof of the Beaural Building—undoubtedly the next to top floor, the bosses' quarters. Without effort he made his fast pace still faster.

He brushed past the guards on the roof, jeering. The Bureau's single weapon was the conditioning; when that failed, or was neutralized, the Bureau was helpless, having given up the use of force. The Readers' weapon was natural aversion to the dead end the Bureau could not help working toward. If Ed-jo had anything to say about the future, there would be a compromise—and that compromise would not disdain the use of force when it was necessary.

He avoided the escalator for the ramp to the storage-hangar, trusting the bosses would have left a way open from their quarters to the roof. Feeling his way cautiously along the wall, he was rewarded with sudden emptiness where a door had evidently been

propped open. And as he had dared to hope, his eye caught the faint gleam of a light.

The elevator-shaft was open; a crudely-fashioned ladder rested on the roof of the car which was level with the floor below. But it was the light hanging in the shaft that held his attention, for this was nothing more than a bowl of oil in which floated a burning wick. He was equally-impressed by the primitiveness of the device, and the evidence it offered that the bosses had prepared long and carefully for their stroke.

Ed-jo went down the ladder and started along the corridor, dimly-lit by lamps flickering in the rooms whose usually-invisible doors were wide open. He caught glimpses of figures, erect and recumbent; paused and then, for no reason he could name, went on a few doors further.

"I want to see The Boss. Smid Jor-al."

**T**HREE MEN standing about a couch turned, startled toward him, revealing the stout individual reclining who scowled in his direction. Ed-jo saw that all were clothed in thermosuits, and his anger at their methodical preparations—which assured that the proles should suffer the very lacks the upper classifications had guarded against—was tinged with a certain amount of admiration.

"Who the devil are you and how did you get here?"

Ed-jo was reasonably certain the man on the couch was The Boss. Leaning negligently against the doorway with a nonchalance he did not feel, he said lightly, "Oh, there are ways." He let the sentence hang on the air. *Bluff*, Sven-yorn had said, *bluff*. "You didn't think the Readers were caught entirely napping by your stroke did you?"

The four bosses exchanged looks. Then the man on the couch said smoothly, "No doubt that's why the

lights are back on in the prole quarters; we wondered."

Ed-jo could not refrain from jerking toward the window. But the plexiglas was unbroken; there was nothing to see. It was indeed possible that the Readers had rigged up some kind of auxilliary power for the lower floors; on the other hand...

"Probably an optical allusion," he said casually "We've been too busy with other things."

The bluff was not working. He could see this in the relaxed attitude of the others; he could almost hear the release of pent breaths. Desperately he tried to regain the initiative.

"You might as well let me have the password. Technicians are constructing new circuits around Information. When they are complete, you will be left up here powerless in both senses of the word."

Smid Jor-al yawned. "Please go away; we're busy."

Ed-jo looked around the room as though to find something to spur his invention. But there was nothing inspiring in the limp tangle of metal lying in a corner, obviously a robot who had collapsed when the power went off. Nor in the pile of pemmican wafers and cans of water; supplies for the siege. Nor in the queerly shaped sack that looked as though it had been dropped carelessly against the wall.

"You—" he began automatically, without the slightest notion of what he was going to say, his eyes still on the bulky sack. He did not complete the sentence. The sack moved, with a little, convulsive jerk.

"You..." he repeated. There was something alive in the sack.

"Excellency!" exclaimed one of the men urgently, "The intruder is quite interested in our...hmm...reserve."

"Indeed," said Jor-al. "Well then, we shall have to insist on extending

our hospitality to him for the—what's the old word?—for the duration."

Ed-jo tried to keep his voice steady, with just a hint of loftiness in it. *Bluff*, Sven-yorn had said. "I'm afraid it's too late, gentlemen. The Readers already know what you plan, and how you have violated your own basic rule of civilization against the use of force."

"The rule has never applied to hu—"

"Shut up, Obin!" Jor-al cut him off in mid-speech. "You talk too much. Young man, you are quite right in what is obviously a sheer guess. We have had to use force on one occasion, so we certainly won't have any scruples in using it to keep you here. Grab him!"

But Ed-jo's mind was working furiously. Whatever was in the sack was vital to the bosses. And it was not, as he had wrongly guessed, a Reader who was being held as a hostage. The rule against the use of force was never applied to hu...the boss called Obin—that must be Obin Cyr-Eu, Boss of Mosk—had started to say. Hu...hu...what was the rest of the word Obin had choked back?

**O**BIN AND the other two bosses edged between him and the door. Trying to give the appearance of being concerned only with avoiding them, Ed-jo moved closer to the sack. "Humanoid!" He almost shouted it aloud. That was the only word that fitted. There was an Ishard in the sack; since Ishards were not considered human there was no interdiction on using violence against them.

"You're making a mistake, Smid," he said to The Boss. "Perhaps you are prepared now to use force on a human but your underlings don't relish it. Better reconsider before it's too late. *The Readers know what is in that sack.*"

"Indeed? How interesting."

"You think I'm fooling; I'm not. If

the Readers were to give up, you'd have the sack thrown from the window. Its contents are the password to save Information from destroying itself."

The Boss suppressed a yawn. "May I interrupt your imaginative tale long enough to inquire why the power isn't on in that case?"

"You know as well as I do, since you were the one who said that the object would be deliberately ambiguous. The Readers are not yet sure whether the password is to be 'Isha,' 'Ishard,' or 'Humanoid'. When they determine, the power will go on—but not on the upper floors."

The Boss sat up and looked at Ed-jo as if really seeing him for the first time. Finally Jor-al asked, "If this is true, why have the Readers sent you?"

Ed-jo debated how much of the truth to tell. This in turn rested on how much The Boss knew of the Readers. He decided to gamble that Jor-al's knowledge was superficial. "There are two groups among the Readers," he declared at last. "I am the leader of one."

"He lies, Your Excellency," burst out Obin Cyr-Eu. "The Readers do not have leaders."

"Be quiet, Obin." Jor-al stared at Ed-jo. "Well?"

"Power," said Ed-jo casually. "It's human nature to want power." He wondered whether he should elaborate on this; thought he caught a faint nod from The Boss, and decided he had said enough. "The group I represent, while agreed to the aims of all the Readers, is not happy at the prospect of a chaotic world. We feel that it would mean the end of civilization."

There was no question of the interest in Jor-al's eye now. I've got him, thought Ed-jo, exultantly. "We have a deal to offer you."

"Impudence!" shouted one of the bosses. "A prole doesn't bargain with the Plotbureau."

"Shut up, Wels," ordered The Boss. "Go on."

"Give me a thermo-suit," demanded Ed-jo. "I'm cold."

Again Wels' sense of propriety was outraged, but Jor-al tolerantly nodded. "Get the Reader-leader a suit." The third boss left the room quietly. "By the way, what's your name? Reader-leader has a jingling sound, but it could turn into a tongue-twister."

"Green Ed-jo."

Ed-jo's confidence continued to grow as he slipped into the warm clothing. The Plotbureau was in the hollow of his hand; one of the bosses had waited on him like an obsequious robot. What a story he would have to tell Jim and Hans and Isa.

"Trouble with the Bureau," he pronounced judicially, "has always been indecisiveness; you never could take a firm stand and stick to it."

JOR-AL SAID, "Very interesting, Green. Sometime I'd like to hear your views on other philosophical points. Meanwhile, if you could bring yourself to it, we are still waiting for enlightenment."

"Briefly, as things stand, the Plotbureau is through. The Readers will turn on the power and there will be nothing you can do about it. There are no conceivable circumstances under which the Bureau could recapture its old, absolute dominance; but by compromising now, you can save your leadership and a great deal of actual power."

"That is an argument, not a proposal."

*Can't stall any longer, he thought. I'll have to chance everything now.* Aloud, he said, "Our proposition is one of alliance. We will turn the power on—everywhere—and support the leadership of the Bureau against the anarchic Readers. You will see that no obstacles are put in the way of perfecting the machines; we will under-

take to stop cheating the Happy Despatch. We will revise our fundamental concepts to permit a limited use of force when unavoidable. Nothing much else need be changed except the outlook on both sides. We shall have, for instance, to consider the desirability of colonizing both Orsog and Isha with our surplus populations—"

"Regardless of the wishes of the inhabitants?"

"Regardless of the wishes of the inhabitants," repeated Ed-jo firmly. "After all, they are merely humanoid. Now, in return, there will have to be one alteration in the structure of the Plotbureau. I shall become its permanent chairman."

"'Permanent chairman,'" mused Jor-al. "A mere trifle, eh?"

Ed-jo's mind was divided in half. Part trembling he waited for the Bureau's decision—would they really give in? Really make him boss of The Boss? The other half frantically planned methods of persuading Readers with the technical knowledge to turn the power back on to support him in his wild scheme. He had no doubt that once this was accomplished and he was established in power—

"You may take this absurd imposter away and tie him up," The Boss' voice came smoothly to his astonished ears. "I think the use of force against him is excusable in any case, and particularly since he himself has advocated it."

Ed-jo stepped back against the wall. The doorway was crowded. Evidently some signal had gone out for reinforcements; probably when the boss had gone to fetch his thermosuit. "You'll have to catch me first," he said.

They showed no immediate inclination to advance upon him. Something pulled his eyes toward the momentarily forgotten sack. It was still wriggling.

Here was an ally at a moment when he desperately needed one. Without turning his back, he retreated toward the sack and with a quick motion pulled at the cord which tied its mouth.

"Stop him! Hurry!"

But they came very slowly, reluctantly. *Victims of their own conditioning*, he thought, fingers still busy; *they can hardly bring themselves to offer violence.*

The nearest boss advanced with outstretched arm. Ed-jo kicked him in the stomach. He backed away, groaning. Ed-jo succeeded in unloosing the cord.

**THE NEXT**—and larger—wave of assailants grabbed his legs, tripping him forward. Ed-jo jerked the mouth of the sack open and spun around, using his fists like hammers against the faces of the bosses. Out of the corner of his eye he saw the Ishard shake himself free of the sack. There was a gag in his mouth; his hands and feet were tied. Nevertheless, he managed to stand upright, showing himself slightly shorter than Ed-jo, dressed in a peculiar costume consisting almost entirely of a skirt, with an ornament of some kind hung around his neck by a thin chain.

Unceremoniously, he grabbed the Ishard around the waist and dragged him to the head of The Boss' couch, trusting that reluctance and the last repulse would give him a momentary breathing spell. He knew that if the bosses persisted they could finally overwhelm him; in the meanwhile he was depending on their real abhorrence of violence, and the deliberately-encouraged life of indolence as against his habit of manual work outdoors.

With one eye on the group he worked quickly at the cord on the Ishard's wrists. It had been clumsily, though tightly tied; it yielded quickly.

Just as he got it loose the combined assault struck him. There was no question that this one was of an entirely different quality. For the first time there was determination and cooperation in the attack. He dodged, squirmed and endeavored to shrink out of reach, though in the limited space this was manifestly impossible. Suddenly The Boss shouted, "The humanoid—get him!"

The Ishard, once his hands were free, had employed the moments when attention was concentrated on Ed-jo, to untie the cord at his ankles and rid himself of the gag. Now, having sidled around the scuffle, he was calmly walking through the doorway to the corridor.

Ed-jo slugged into half-relaxed bodies, then leapt over the struggling mass in a bounding arc. "Come on!"

Together they ran toward the elevator shaft with the others in pursuit as they crowded through the door. Shouts from behind urged the stopping of the fugitives, but the occasional head that thrust itself inquiringly outward had an expression too startled or puzzled to suggest quick implementation of any flank attack.

"Here," directed Ed-jo. "In the elevator-shaft."

The Ishard followed him. The door was still jammed open, the primitive light still burned, but one of the bosses had thoughtfully removed the ladder.

10



UICK—ON my shoulders."

The Ishard looked bewildered for a moment as Green Ed-jo stooped; then he climbed on his back, steadying himself on the walls of the shaft. Grasping his

ankles, Edjo stood erect. "Hang on to the sill," he ordered.

"I...can...not," answered the Ishard, as though he were having difficulty not only with his position, but with the language.

"You must." Straining the muscles of his arms, Edjo boosted him another six inches, was rewarded to feel a lessening of the weight as the Ishard's fingers must have grasped the sill above. "Just hang on," he repeated. "I'll pull you up."

The pursuers were now at the elevator. Dodging the nearest, he made his now characteristic vaulting jump, clung for a moment beside his dangling companion, and then pulled himself up over the ledge.

"Guards, guards! Stop them!"

He leaned over and took the Ishard's wrists. But when he pulled there was sudden resistance; those below had caught the hanging feet. There was a yell of triumph.

"Kick out," he panted. "Kick yourself loose."

"Can...not...use...force."

"Damn it, man—this is no time for fancy scruples. They would have killed you—thrown you out of the window alive."

Obstinately the Ishard said, "Die better than force."

Exasperation filled Edjo. How could anyone be so blindly fanatical? He had an impulse to let the man from Venus go, to leave him to his fate—and an equally strong impulse to rescue him at any cost. He looked around him for some means of help and saw nothing but the lamp, the bowl in which a wick burned in oil, resting on the ledge nearby. Without losing his hold he reached over with one foot and kicked the lamp down on the heads of those below.

Darkness and screams of pain came simultaneously as the hot oil fell upon upturned faces. He jerked, and the

Ishard came upward in his grip. Still holding one wrist, he felt his way forward in the direction of the hangar.

Cautioning silence, they walked quietly up the ramp and stood on the roof. In the starlight, the forms of the guards were perceptible, but they did not seem to be moving in their direction. Stealthily Edjo led toward one of the bileways farthest from the guards.

Walking rapidly—for there was no sign of pursuit—he considered the collapse of his grandiose scheme. True, he had salvaged one extremely important success—the approximate password for the continued operation of Information—but what, he asked himself bitterly, could he do with it? Give it to the Readers, was the only answer, and then sink into obscurity. A pointless ending to an adventure which at one point had seemed to bring him to the greatest position in the world.

THEY HAD covered half the length of the bileway in silence when, shrugging off some of his chagrin, Ed-Jo asked his companion, "How come you got yourself all tied up like that in the bosses' home grounds?"

The Ishard shook his head. "Not speak Earth language good."

"I gathered that much already. But go ahead; I'm no grammarian myself."

"From Isha...ship...hear report."

"You're one of the crew of an Ishard spaceship getting a report from your people here."

"Not crew...what you call—let me see—ah, writer."

Edjo shook his head dubiously. "Must be an obsolete word; I never heard of it. But go on."

As near as he could make out from the Ishard's recital in a language which greatly impeded his expression,



the expedition had landed some time before, near the city of Nork. Being evidently of an insatiably curious turn, the visitor had not only been intrigued by his first glimpse of terrestrial life, but anxious to see much more of it than he could during the brief stop of the Venerian spaceship. Finding a fellow planetman in the role of one of the crew of a transcontinental rockepult, he had arranged to be picked up on the next trip from Venus, meanwhile, with his mentor's connivance, stowing away on a flight to Lank. When the rockepult berthed on the roof of the Beaural building, he again begged a stay till the return flight, promising faithfully to remain out of sight of the guards. However, his urgent curiosity had betrayed him; he was captured and taken before the Bureau, who immediately recognized the lucky potentialities for their purpose. They had imprisoned him in a room during the final preparations for their coup; just before the power was turned off, he was bound and gagged and tied in the sack.

During his narrative the moon rose; being nearly full, it showed every twist of the bileway's cables. They now neared the roof of another building, which Ed-jo was certain was not the Metro; no guards were in sight; he surmised that they had abandoned their posts for the shelter of the hangar.

"Now all I have to do is figure some way of getting down from here."

There would, he knew, be little point in exploring any of the other bileways; there was no point at which they connected with lower terraces or the seawater conveyor. The thought of reversing his day's climb could not be entertained; his legs turned to water at the mere idea of attempting to cling to the five hundred precarious holds of a downward progress.

While he puzzled, the Ishard raised the ornament that hung around his

neck to his mouth and began speaking softly into it, in a singsong speech. After a while he paused, and the ornament metallically answered. The Ishard smiled, nodded, and gave out another spate of words.

"What is it?" asked Ed-jo, when he was through. "Some kind of communication, I know, but where do you get the power?"

"Just toy," replied the Ishard apologetically. "Speak to my spaceship. Back now, they look for me. Come soon. Power... in here." He tapped the ornament.

Ed-jo shrugged. Strange humanoids! They called gadgets beyond terrestrial technology mere toys, and were willing to let themselves be killed rather than employ violence to defend their lives. Incomprehensible. And Lil-isa was one of them; one of them who had trained herself and studied to pass as a human, and had deliberately chosen the portion of a prole when she might have been enjoying a life which must be—to her—ininitely happier...

WHILE SHAU—which was as near as he could make out the Ishard's name—strolled around the roof admiring Lank's moonlit towers and shadowed spaces, Ed-jo pondered again the humiliating defeat he had suffered. For the first time the thought of what reaction the Readers would have toward the course he had contemplated occurred to him. How would they react to what they must consider nothing less than his contemplated treason? How would Jim and Liz and Hans regard him? Or Isa?

Of course, they could not but be grateful for the keyword which he was bringing back with him—or rather, a clue from which the password could unquestionably be deduced. But in spite of this, wouldn't there always be a barrier between him and the proles? He could imagine, years ahead in the

new society which the Readers would erect—and how unconscionably dull it seemed to him—that he would be pointed out in whispers as the man who had been ready to betray Freedom for his own selfish and unworthy ends.

And there would be no escape. His early dream of leaving the cities for the wild country would become increasingly impossible as the Readers spread out from the urban centers, redeveloping and reemploying the long abandoned rural areas. Earth had no place for Green Ed-jo.

Overcome with physical weariness, as well as with self-pity, he dozed into restless sleep. He was startled awake by a strange, premonitory twinge that some momentous event was about to happen. But the moon still hung bright in the sky; Shau was peering westward toward the ocean; nothing was changed.

"Must be time for the Ishard ship," he muttered.

Then, so startlingly that it gave the illusion of a tremendous noise, the lights of Lank came on. Not flickeringly, not one by one, but all together, in a great crescendo. The mile high towers, dark and dead an instant before, revealed themselves in thousands of illuminated windows.

"The power!" he gasped; they've turned it back on!"

They must, he decided, have destroyed Information rather than surrender or take the chance of injuring the millions of proles trapped in their quarters all over the world. Ed-jo shook his head over such wasteful sentimentality. If they had only waited till he got down with the key word.

It was an anticlimax when the flattened spheroid landed on the roof near them. The Ishard spaceship seemed insignificant in size compared with an exmosphlier which required a spaceport to receive it; it was no larger than a transcontinental rocketpult.

He paid little heed to the dark men and women who came out of the ship, nor their exchange with Shau, who was excitedly talking in their singsong language. Disconsolate, he wandered toward the escalators.

"Cameral Building, Lank," the electronic directors informed him as his proximity caused them to operate. "Please give the password for today and the doors will open."

Ed-jo smiled sardonically. Either the Readers had not yet got around to changing the old Beaural safeguards or... Was it possible that they had surrendered to the Bureau after all?

The director patiently repeated itself. It would go on doing so as long as he remained near it. He moved away; the Ishards would probably be willing to take him down to the ground. Without any particular object in mind he crossed the roof to the wide ramp leading to the hangars.

Where the roof closed over the descending incline there was, on both sides, a series of telescreens, erected so that a number of travelers, guards or visitors might simultaneously send and receive messages. These were now all in operation, and few of them carried the same broadcast.

THE NEAREST one showed a group of proles busy working on a machine Ed-jo recognized as Lank's Central Troubleshooter. An excited voice said, obviously for the benefit of those listening in, "Adjustments have now been made on all the doors and elevators, jeecars, copters and other devices in Lank so that the giving of a password is no longer necessary to their operation. For some time they will continue to ask for a password, but the dependent mechanism has been short-circuited. No doubt the same operation has been performed by this time in the other cities."

The next telescreen made Ed-jo's heart jump. The background scene was unquestionably Jupiter; there was a background glimpse through the windows of a cosie of the incredible and majestic Jovian mountains; occasionally a servile gook fussed around the recumbent figure of a man on a couch.

"...and I find it hard to believe," the reclining human was saying agitatedly. "The Bureau swept away in an instant...prohibition of the slaughter of goods...no advantage to service in this colony...don't know what to say. On the whole, I think I'd like to return to earth immediately. On the next exmosphlier."

A voice undistorted by interplanetary static asked, "How about you other Organizers? We have now polled about a quarter of the Jovian colonists and the sentiment for return to earth is unanimous so far."

A chorus of voices jumbled themselves together over the telescreen. "Me too." "No Bureau—what's the use of exile?" "Never want to see a gooch again." "Let's go home." "Home...home...home!"

The next screen was also on an interplanetary hookup. The unfamiliar swamps of Isha steamed under the heavy clouds. "...and naturally we appreciate the expressions of gratitude which have come from our brothers of earth as well as their statements that any and all of the sons of Han will be welcomed on that planet. Now the earth, our first home, is free..."

Ed-jo turned impatiently toward the screen showing a section of Information. "It was, of course, a terribly hard decision to make, especially since we were all isolated from each other by the shutdown of power. I doubt if any Reader, anywhere, ever seriously considered the desirability of surrendering to the Bureau; nevertheless, without consultation, how could any of us take

the responsibility of letting Information destroy itself?

"I suppose most of you know by this time that our brothers from Isha transmitted the password; *how* they did it is generally unknown yet. Our source of power is atomic; Isha's is magnetic. Many Ishards carry little sending and receiving sets around with them, but except when there is a visiting spaceship from Isha in earth's vicinity their reach is negligible. Those who volunteered to exile themselves on earth to encourage the Readers to build a new society in the shell of the old all had such radios—to use an ancient term; there is no modern equivalent—with them, but for various reasons, some moral (feeling it not right to have sources of help unavailable to the Readers with whom they had thrown their lot), some practical (the impossibility of proles having private, personal possessions without discovery by the teletectors and consequent exposure to the Bureau) they concealed or abandoned them. However, in every city there were concealed close to the most vital machines, sets which could be used in some great emergency. The danger of discovery was discounted by the fact that even if the teletectors noted their presence, or transcribed their words, they would be disregarded either as machine parts of forgotten usage or as the unintelligible gibberish of static or defective mechanism.

"It was these sets which the spaceship from Isha set in operation when the Ishard Shau informed them of his escape from the Bureau. In every case, Readers heard and managed to get one of their Ishard comrades to the spot in order to translate.

"You will all be glad that not only has Information not destroyed itself, but we have gotten from it the successive passwords so that its security is assured..."

Ed-jo thought resentfully: *Never*



even mentioned that I was the one who rescued him.

**S**UDDENLY the sullen desire to justify himself became imperative. To the tuning apparatus of the telescreen Ed-jo said, "Private communication please. Nore Lil-isa; Eighty-seventh floor of the Metro Building."

It took some time to make the connection; finally she appeared on the screen. "Ah, Jo," she murmured; "how could you?"

"How could I what?" he growled defensively.

"Use force."

"So the damned humanoid had to spill everything. And I saved his life."

"Ah, Jo, Jo. Still talking of humanoids; still acting the primitive man."

"Primitive. Maybe. Anyway, I'd survive under conditions under which these advanced Ishards and Orsogians—yes, and Readers with their fancy notions—would go under. Primitive man; you put the accent on primitive—I put it on *man*."

There was a silence. It looked as though Lil-isa was crying. He felt obscurely ashamed of what he had just said, nevertheless he was impelled to burst out, "The truth is, there's just no place for me."

"You're right, Ed-jo," Will-jim's single eye looked out of the telescreen. "The Bureau's answer would have been the Happy Despatch. Now there

is no more Happy Despatch; it will never be again. But we who are your friends: Isa, Lu, Hans, Liz, have been talking things over. It is almost certain that the Bureau's colonists will all abandon Jupiter. There is, at the moment no reason for the Readers to send anyone to replace them; under the new conditions we shall have room for years, if not centuries on earth. Jupiter is your native world; you alone of all men can walk freely on its surface. Wouldn't you be happier there?"

Ed-jo was overwhelmed by the nostalgic vision of a cosie, and of the grandeur of the giant planet. Of the warmth and comfort of the presence of goochs who had loved him freely without thinking of return. Of a planet where he would be master—not just because there were no competing humans, but because he alone was destined to be master there.

While he was thinking, forming the words on his tongue: Yes, yes! On the next exmosphier! Lil-isa's voice came softly: "And I'll go with you, Ed-jo—if you'll consider a humanoid."

**T**HE BALANCE of the story of the coming of Freedom, is, I am sure, familiar to all my readers. The day-by-day account of the Readers' progress in eradicating Beaural civilization and replacing it with a genuinely human one was not only piously recorded in a dozen archives, but transmitted to the sister planets of Isha and Orsog as well as the cosie on Jupiter where lived Green Ed-jo and his wife, Lil-isa. Lil-isa was, of course, more or less a prisoner of the degravitated cosie, while her husband roamed freely; but it is not recorded that she ever complained of her choice.

It was she who preserved the records of the Readers' progress as long as she lived and she passed the duty

to her children who saw the great day when the calendar was finally changed to After Freedom, when the earth had finally been purged of all that the Plotbureau stood for.

Here on Jupiter we honor and revere the memory of our first mother, our common ancestor. Of course we acknowledge the importance of our first father, Green Ed-jo also. It is

from him we inherit our ability to walk abroad upon the surface of our planet. But we have our reservations. In the common speech, where so much history is preserved, we say to one who show signs of obstreperous or unsocial behavior, "Well, you certainly have some of the old Ed-jo in you."



The back cover of McBride's "Prize Science Fiction" informs us that the stories presented therein were selected, out of several thousand published last year, by the Jules Verne Award Committee. This committee was headed by Forrest J. Ackerman, and Donald A. Wollheim was chief advisor, making the final selections for the book. Each author represented received a bronze reproduction of the statuette on Jules Verne's tombstone, "in token of having produced one of the twelve prize science-fiction stories of the year". The volume contains 230 pages, and sells for \$3.00.

Although it isn't so stated, selections were pretty obviously restricted to short stories and short novelets, with the single exception of Leigh Brackett's "Last Days of Shandakor". Other authors represented are Charles Beaumont, with "The Beautiful Woman"; Arthur C. Clarke, with "All The Time in the World"; Mark Clifton, with "Star, Bright"; Alfred Coppel, with "The Peacemaker"; August Derleth, with "McIlvaine's Star"; Gordon R. Dickson, with "Listen"; C. M. Kornbluth, with "The Altar At Midnight"; Robert Donald Locke, with "Demotion"; Walter M. Miller, Jr., with "The Big Hunger"; Martin Pearson & Cecil Corwin, with "The Mark of Demeter", and Eric Frank Russell, with "The Timeless Ones".

The difficulties in presenting such a volume, even granting that only short stories can be used, and disregarding the possibility of duplications (I don't know whether this was a factor in the present selections), are rather obvious. Few readers familiar with the period in question will agree on anyone else's list of the golden dozen. Some of these may be rather good, but I doubt that I'd call any of them—even the Russell story which I was happy to run in *Science Fiction Quarterly*—as "best".

[Turn To Page 66]



# TEN MINUTES TO DAYLIGHT

by Russ Winterbotham

(illustrated by Milton Luros)

The life-and-death question was: did this creature have sufficient intelligence to be outwitted?

THE SOUTHERN horizon sparked orange, heralding the approach of the rising sun in the twilight zone of Mercury. After the first reddish-gold arc of the flaming solar disc pushed itself above the horizon, heat would return; then for 264 hours there would be daylight before twilight came again.

Daylight would be hell. Temperatures of 750 degrees, winds of flame, clouds of metallic vapor. Any man caught out in daylight on Mercury would be cooked to his bones.

Captain Damon Spane scowled his heavy brows down over his eyes like precipices, and he hunched his giant sixfoot frame forward, as if to push the obstacles from his path. Beside him, just as tall, but fatter, stood Dr. Allie Critchlow, the zoologist. Critchlow touched the skipper's arm. Spane shook himself free.

"Only ten minutes of twilight left," said the Captain. "We must do something quick."

He raised his eyes toward the spaceship, just a hundred yards away. But the ship might as well have been on Mars, for between the men and their safety stood The Creature.

Captain Spane had called it an ape, but it wasn't an ape. Its hair wasn't hair at all, but an insulating fuzz to protect it from heat and cold. Its stumpy hind legs bent the wrong way, like a bird's, and its tail was just a balancing-organ.

Even the beast's head wasn't ape-like. It had no chin, and the lower jaw was studded with triangular shark teeth. Its nose wasn't a real nose at all, simply a couple of nares, like dimples under the small piggish eyes. And the eyes worked independently, like a chameleon's, one fixed on Captain Spane and the other on Dr. Critchlow.

"Stand still! Don't move!" Critchlow whispered hoarsely; "maybe we can bluff him."

"Bluff hell," said Spane. But he

didn't move; there seemed to be sense in Critchlow's suggestion. Back on Terra, men got into cages with wild animals; they showed no fear and the animals were bluffed. Most of the time—that is, because even lion-tamers got mauled occasionally. But there was a time-limit on the bluffing game here; in ten minutes even the weather-proof clothing the men wore would melt. It was good clothing, fair enough to keep out wind and cold, but it couldn't stand up against the sun's fire in Mercury daytime. Not even in the twilight zone, where temperatures were temperate.

"If we only had a gun," Critchlow moaned.

"We don't have one because you said there was no dangerous beasts in the twilight zone—nothing but lizards and wobbies, you said."

"This one is from the lowlands, not the Horizon Hills," Critchlow alibied. "Anyhow, even if we had a gun, we couldn't kill that beast before he clawed us to ribbons." Critchlow had caught a glimpse of the four-inch, knife-like claws on each of the forelegs of the beast.

The monster waved the claws, like hands, and took a step toward them.

Critchlow reached over his shoulder and turned a switch on the battery-pack strapped on his back. The batteries were low, but the searchlight on Critchlow's chest shot a beam upward, directly into the monster's eyes.

**T**HE CREATURE stopped, focussed both of his eyes on the light, and blinked. Captain Spane noticed heavy, transparent lids folding themselves down over the eyes. A reflex governed by light, because on Mercury all light is accompanied by intense heat.

That no heat followed the beam seemed to startle the creature; he stood motionless. Even the pawing of the air stopped.

"He's afraid!" whispered Spane.

"For a moment," replied Critchlow. "When he figures that the light won't hurt him, he'll attack. How much time do we have?"

Spane almost afraid to turn his head, glanced at the southern horizon. The orange glow was brighter. "Seven minutes maybe."

He turned his head back. "We have to keep him thinking we're dangerous, huh?"

Critchlow snorted. "He doesn't think. Notice his forehead; he hasn't brains enough to think. He probably has as much intelligence as a rattlesnake."

"We can't stand here forever," the captain said. "We have to do something."

The animal was weaving his head from side to side, staring at the searchlight gleam.

"An animal that big doesn't scare very easily," said Critchlow.

"What does he do?"

"Keep alive mostly. He hasn't the intelligence to do much else; he mates, feeds, destroys enemies, protects himself from the elements. Everything is governed by instinct."

"Maybe if I kicked him in the shins—"

"He'd kill you the way you'd swat a mosquito."

"No chance of him getting tired, I suppose?"

"About the same chance you'd get tired of waiting for a seven course dinner."

The captain looked upward and saw the protective eyelids opening. The creature glared into the searchlight beam with bare eyes. One of the eyeballs twisted itself around and looked back at Captain Spane.

"If he only had brains, we might outwit him,"

Allie Critchlow shook his head. "He isn't likely to put this game on an intellectual basis."

The monster sniffed through the



nostrils in his cheeks. The noise sounded like suction pumps.

"He's deciding we're not dangerous," said Critchlow. "Now he's trying to catch our scent, to see if we're good to eat."

"It's like a nightmare. I want to run but I don't dare." Spane paused. "Are you sure he hasn't got any brains?"

Critchlow gave a hysterical little chuckle. "Why do you keep harping on that? Of course he has brains, but he doesn't use 'em. Even a fish has brains, and you can teach a flea tricks; but this guy isn't doing any thinking, except possibly about inviting us to dinner."

Spane sighed, and his huge shoulders heaved. He didn't know what to do. "Looks like we're going to be a meal for this fellow," he said. "He'll probably like you best. You're juicy. I'm tough."

"This is no time to joke," said Critchlow, savagely. "We've only got five minutes at most."

"No," said the captain. "It's time to act."

"Maybe if each of us took out in a different direction, he could only get one of us," said Critchlow.

"And the other would feel guilty for leaving a pal. Every night, if I got away, I'd hear your screams all over again. No soap, pal. Either we both get out of this together, or we both stay here forever."

The Captain watched the animal. He was shifting his weight, getting ready to come after them.

"We'll have to do something to make him think we're not a good meal," the captain said.

"But he doesn't think—"

**D**R. ALLIE CRITCHLOW never got the rest of what he was going to say out of his mouth. The Captain turned on his heel and slugged the zoologist right in the jaw. Critchlow

collapsed and fell to the ground. The monster stood still for a moment, as if undecided by the sudden movement of his prospective breakfast.

"Sorry I had to do it, pal," said Captain Spane. He whipped out his sheaf-knife and plunged it into a fold of Critchlow's outer garment. He ripped out a small triangle of cloth and stuffed it into his mouth. He chewed while he cut again. But this time, Spane cut the straps of the battery-pack on Critchlow's back.

"Wanna bite, pardner?" the captain asked, looking up at the monster.

The creature blinked and started to move forward.

Spane seized the battery-pack and flung it hard, straight upward into the giant creature's gaping mouth. The mouth crunched down. The triangular teeth pierced the battery case and acid seared the monster's mouth.

The hairy beast roared. It was a shriek such as Captain Spane had never heard before; the whine of a jet-engine piercing Mach 2, the wail of a lost soul and the growl of the damned. The hind legs straightened and the creature sprang upward into the air. Captain Spane cowered, but no knife-like talons raked his skin.

Screeching like a banshee, the monster scrambled down the hillside toward a little stream that was forming beneath the edge of a glacier melting as the first warm waves of daylight waited from the south.

The animal drank in greedy slurps, and while he washed the acid from his mouth, Spane pulled the bulky, fat-weighted figure of Zoologist Critchlow from the ground. Like a sack of beans, the captain threw the scientist over his shoulder and hurried toward the spaceship.

There was need for hurry, for the horizon was glowing with fire as the first beams of sunlight swept over the hills. In the distance, clouds of metallic

vapor swirled over the land, ready to cook any tender earth-born flesh that lay in its path. It was the hot williwaw of a molten planet.

The captain closed the locks behind him. Already the air conditioning machinery was thumping. He let Critchlow slide to the floor.

The doctor opened his eyes. "I did

it, pal," said the captain.

"Huh?" Critchlow looked upward at his companion. "Oh! The monster; what did you do to get rid of him?"

"I made him think you weren't good to eat," said Spane. "And listen, you smart slob, he *does* use his brains. Enough to draw a wrong conclusion."

★

## **READIN' and WRITHIN'** (continued from page 62)

The basic idea of the volume is a good one, I'd say, and I'd like to see it continued, providing it is frankly described as a collection of short stories and short novelets, and if a more discriminating set of judges are chosen. The editor had to select his dozen from the preliminary lists, and was expected to provide a "balanced" book; this I'd question, too, unless the "balance" merely means avoiding two stories so similar as to destroy each other's effect when read consecutively. Moreover, I'd want to see some sort of statement from the judges, as well as the editor, as to the basic standards employed in the preliminary and final selections; there ought to be some notes on why certain stories were not chosen, particularly in the final selecting—why the editor made the decision he did when forced to choose between two which were almost even, as to merit and length, etc. The introduction to the present volume is just another introduction to science-fiction itself; against this I have no cavil, but by itself in a volume of this nature, it is not sufficient.

This initial volume has its interest, but I'd say it was a specialized one—for the collector. It's not a bad introduction to science fiction; it might go down better than some of the more weighty (both literarywise and thickness-wise) collections, particularly for younger readers. But there's no getting away from the fact that "Prize Science Fiction" has very little content, no matter how you look at it, for three dollars.

It's competing, for example, with Simon & Schuster's "Children of Wonder", 21 stories, fantastic tales about small fry, collected by William Tenn. This volume sells for \$2.95, has 336 pages (and more words per page than PSF), and is a brilliant, if erratic collection, and one you'll want for your bookshelves. Here the impact is cumulative, and stories you dislike are likely as not to illuminate those that hit you just right.

R. W. L.

After how many years, how many generations, the Earthmen were going home — peacefully submitting to the order of exile. What was the meaning of it all? Why were the Earthlings letting themselves be expelled?

# To Civilize

by Algis Budrys

(illustration by C. A. Murphy)



**T**HERE WAS no moon, there were no stars; the sky was overcast. The spacefield lights threw up an umbrella of yellow-white, shot through by the silvered reflections thrown off by the ship on the takeoff stand. The big winches at the ship's cargo-hatches creaked their cables with a disproportionate loudness. Except for the constant undercurrent of the sound of straining metal, the field was quiet.

*Is it too quiet?* Deric thought. Was it the silence that lurks at the van of a storm, waiting to be ripped to tatters as the sudden wind broke out, as the

hurricane spun out of the tropics and howled?

*Is this how it ends?* Deric leaned his weight against the rail of the observation-platform, his whiplash body drawn up into a taut ribbon. The field lights gleamed from the polished blackness of his hide, glinting on the cropped silver follicles of his crest. *Is this the way of Earthmen?*

Except for the graceful bodies of his own people as they operated the silent cargo-carriers streaming out to the ship, there was no life on the field. Even behind the big doors of the cargo-

hatches, there was no sign of movement. Under him, at ground-level, the Galactics waited in their big room for the loading to end. Then there would be a procession of figures, loaded with their personal baggage, walking out across the field to the ship. There would be women holding or leading children, and men walking beside them.

In the beginning, when the order had been published, Deric had thought there might be trouble. The Galactics were not a meek lot. While they were independent enough in their everyday affairs, and even occasionally quarrelsome among themselves, he had seen emergencies weld them into a tight, concerted group that operated at high and heedless efficiency. There was every right to expect some sort of demonstration on their part.

Nothing had happened. The Galactics had sold their holdings to the government without a murmur, and disposed of their other non-essential belongings quickly and quietly. Their children had been withdrawn from any classes or special groups they might have attended; goodbyes had been said; and now, a scant GST month after the issuance of the order by the Voroseii, the Galactics were leaving Voroseith, never to return.

*Never?* Even now, Deric found that impossible to believe. The order was specific, and enforceable, but he had seen other laws relaxed, or evaded with the passage of time.

Or, for that matter, overcome.

Was that it? Deric had heard many stories about the GSN and its big green ships that poured the fire of a sun from their innumerable guns. Were the Earthpeople leaving Voroseith so that the planet would be open to bombardment from outer space?

No, the possibility had been considered before, and rejected. True, no single planet could stand before the

Federation. Not even a group of solar systems could do it. The lesson of the Ardath Secession was still fresh, and terrible. But Voroseith's protection lay in the very fact that she was a single planet, and relatively unimportant to the Federation as a whole. Compared to the GSN fleet, her own navy was an insignificant handful of ships. But, ship for ship, it was just as deadly, and the price of conquest would be high—too high for the prize it would bring. There would be no war.

Still—why was there no protest? The Galactics had homes and property on Voroseith. The grandchildren of the Firstcomers were grown and bred on this world. There were friendships, business relations, ties of many kinds by the hundreds. As a lover of that strange composite art form that was opera, Deric would suffer from the loss of new Berkeley libretti, for no one else could work as well with Marto Libh.

The Federation itself had done nothing beyond dispatching the transport. All reference to the order had been offhand, casual, as a thing that existed without question.

He could not let the Galactics depart and leave him without an answer. He pushed himself back from the rail and slid rapidly down the ramp to the room where the Earthpeople were.

Here, too, there was silence; even the children were quiet. The Galactics sat in rows on benches, facing each other across the narrow aisles. There was no talking, but groups of friends had sat down together, and occasionally there would be a smile or a nod to someone across the aisle.

AS DERIC entered, several heads turned in his direction. In every case, there was a friendly smile as he was recognized; several people separated themselves from their immediate groups and came over to him.

"Deric!" That was Morris, one of the men who had worked at the museum with him. The Galactic strode up to him rapidly, and laid his hand behind Deric's head with a firm and friendly greeting-stroke. Deric gently touched his right hand to the Earthman's own.

"I thought you'd come down," Morris said. His face was regretful at the thought of his leaving.

Now that he was here, among them, Deric felt the strangeness of the situation even more strongly than before. He had never seen a group of Galactics before without seeing his own people among them. It felt strange to suddenly realize that this was the winnowing of all the Galactics on Voroseith—that most of these people knew each other less well than they did the individual Voroseii among whom they had lived and worked; but that, nevertheless, they were suddenly a homogenous and segregated group by mere virtue of the fact that they were all Galactics.

It was possible to consider the entire problem as a sort of intellectual puzzle, to be evaluated in the light of the economic factors that had made the order necessary. But Morris was his friend and co-worker, so the situation became one of losing a good friend, of never seeing his family again, and of learning to remember that Day 184, GST, was no longer Susan Morris' birthday.

"I wanted to see you," Deric said. "I'm not sure I should be here, but—" He stopped, not sure of his words. "Well..."

Morris smiled. "Thanks, Deric."

The other Galactics who had come up exchanged greetings with him in turn. Each of them, like Morris, reflected a regret as great as Deric's own.

He saw Berkeley, sitting by himself at the end of a bench, his eyes somber. *How does he feel?* Deric wondered. He

turned back to Morris. "I—if it's possible, could I talk to him? You know how much I admire his work."

"Easily done," Morris said. "Come on."

Deric followed his friend across the floor of the waiting room. As he passed among the seated Galactics, he could see the same traces of sadness in their eyes—sadness, but no protest, no rebellion.

Berkeley looked up at Morris' words. "Deric Liss?" He turned his eyes on Deric. "Of course. He reached out and touched Deric's neck warmly. "I've read your *Cultural History*. One of the most valuable texts I've ever seen."

"Thank you," Deric said, his eyes glowing. Completely embarrassed, he felt his body twitch awkwardly. "I've always admired your work," he blurted out, conscious of the clumsiness of the statement. Following Berkeley's compliment as it did, it sounded more like back-scratching than anything like the sincere appreciation he had intended to express.

But Berkeley smiled, his eyes crinkling at the corners. "I'll never have a composer like Marto Lihh to work with again," he said. A trace of his former brooding look returned to his face.

Deric could hold back his puzzlement no longer. He looked up at Morris and Berkeley. "I can't understand this," he said, his voice full of uncertainty. "Why are you leaving? Or, if you must leave, why aren't you..." He let the sentence trail off. One doesn't ask a man why he hasn't been resentful of some injustice you've done him.

"Why aren't we displaying our famous Terrestrial aggressiveness?" Berkeley asked, smiling.

"Yes." Completely disconcerted, he said, "And you—a man who's leaving everything he loves and works for.

Aren't *you*, at least, angry at what we've done?"

Berkeley shook his head. "Angry? Your planet's overcrowded. There are no other habitable planets in this system, and we were all competing with you for what room there was. It's only natural that your government has to consider the well-being of its people. After all, we are a foreign race; this is your planet, to do with as you choose. I'd say the order was a very wise move, from the point of view of your people. I'm sure the rest of us feel the same way."

Morris nodded.

"But the Federation..."

"The Federation is exactly that—not an empire. You have the privileges of membership—and the rights, as well," Berkeley pointed out. If he himself felt a personal loss, he kept it within himself.

"I still don't understand. When the Ardan group seceded, the remainder of the Federation refused to allow it," Deric said.

**B**ERKELEY'S face clouded. "The Ardatn Secession was an armed insurrection, born of frustrated ambition and a desire for power. It was motivated only by the Ardans' drive to regain control of the Federation."

"But they were as justified in their eyes as we are in ours," Deric protested.

Berkeley cocked his head. "Perhaps—but what about the Ardan dissolutionists? Was that a sign that even all the Ardans were in agreement with their government's policy?"

"I don't approve of our action, either," Deric replied.

Berkeley smiled. "You mean, it strikes you as being somewhat peremptory; and this feeling is augmented by the fact that we're submitting to it without any action that would make it seem emotionally justified. If we fought back, you could at least feel that maybe getting rid of the

quarrelsome Terrestrials was worthwhile."

"Yes..." Deric admitted slowly, abashed. He had never thought it out that far.

"But you're not actively angry at the order," Berkeley went on. "You sympathize with us, but you don't feel it's an outrageous situation."

The Galactic was right. Deric could feel himself twitching with embarrassment again. "I don't know what to say," he mumbled.

The librettist smiled again. "No need for that," he said warmly. "We've known from the very beginning that this would happen someday. We've accepted it, so it didn't come as a shock."

Deric, once again, felt his puzzlement coming to the fore. "But why did you come at all, then? Look at the history of the last three generations. After we were contacted by the sample ship, your people came here, settled into our culture, and began to live alongside us. More than alongside. You worked for the same goal as we—the progress of Voroseithan culture and civilization. You speak our language. Never once have you done something for the benefit of the Federation, or of Earth. It was as if—as if you were Voroseii yourselves, not as if you were foreigners at all.

"It was difficult to believe. We expected taxes, or levies of *some* kind. We expected you to bring your arts and your sciences, to merge our culture with yours. But none of that happened. And now, though you are Galactics, you are nevertheless Voroseii. If you knew you would someday leave, why did you make Voroseith more truly a home than any other world could possibly be?"

**B**ERKELEY, who wrote poetry as a Vorosei would, thinking in terms of a six-tone scale, let a flicker of sorrow cross his face. "Yes, I imagine that would be what you'd expect. It's

what the Ardans did, when they guided the Federation. You're right, and yet, you're wrong, as well."

He smiled, almost wistfully. "Yes, Voroseith *is* home to us, and we will miss it. But we were working for the benefit of the Federation, nonetheless. We had to act as though we would always live here—more than act, we had to *believe* we would always live here. We had to devote all our wholehearted energies to working for Voroseith. It was—" He hesitated, and, for a moment, there was a lost look on his face. "It was a shock when we realized that our job was done, that Voroseith was ready to go out into interstellar space."

"Interstellar space?" Deric felt his back arch in puzzlement.

Morris nodded. "It's coming. That's why you've got your navy. You were working out the necessary techniques."

"But the Federation rules the Galaxy. Will you permit us to go out into your territory?"

Berkeley spoke again. "The Federation doesn't rule anything; you can't impose civilization by force. It's your turn, as a member of a civilizing movement, to go out and pass on what you have to other people. Space is full of worlds, and people. Earth *guides* the Federation, true, but it doesn't run it—no one does. We work with the common bond of civilization between us—but it is civilization as an abstract concept—not as a rigid, universal pattern of some kind, into which each diverse culture has to be hammered and forced, jammed into a mold for which it was never suited."

"We didn't try to make you do things our way, did we?" Morris asked.

Deric waved his arm negatively. "No—no, you didn't. You learned from us, and then you became just so many more individuals working to improve our culture. You brought in a fresh approach to many problems; but

it was an approach founded in the roots of our culture, not of yours." He stopped.

The annunciator crackled. "All cargo has been loaded. Passengers will please embark." The dispatcher's voice lost its impersonality. Another Vorosei was saying goodbye to his friends. "Farewell, Earthmen."

The seated rows of Galactics stood up, still quiet despite the shuffle of feet, the scraping of baggage as it was picked up.

"So now we'll be out in space beside you?" Deric asked Berkeley.

The Galactic nodded. "When the groups like ours leave a world, that is the historical sign that another race is going out into the stars, civilized, to civilize."

Deric felt a surge of pride shoot through him. "Then, this was a stage, like the time of the sample ship, during which we were trained."

MORRIS shook his head. "Not trained. The sample ship was a test, true—but a test designed to measure nothing more than your ability to conceive of other races beyond your own, and your readiness to accept the fact that interstellar travel was an actuality. Why should we train you? Our culture is not superior to yours in any way—and there are far too many diverse races in space, and far too few Earthmen even remotely to justify any attempt to make you do things the way they're done on Earth.

"No, we were just sent here to accustom you to working beside other races. We weren't instructors—we were co-workers."

Most of the Galactics were already through the doors that led out to the field. Morris and Berkeley touched Deric's neck again. "Goodbye, Deric," Morris said.

Berkeley suddenly reached into his pack and pulled out a sheaf of manuscript. "I wish you'd take this, Deric."



Deric looked at the top page. "But—but this is the original manuscript for the Llersthein Epic!"

Berkeley nodded. "Take it. I'll remember it, and nobody will really understand it, where I'm going."

Deric looked up at the Galactic. The somber eyes looked back into his, and, though this was not truly one of his people—theoretically, the facial expressions of one race should be incomprehensible to another—Deric could read what lay in the mind behind the eyes; nor did it occur to him that there was anything remarkable about the fact that he could.

"Thank you," he said, and let the position of his hands and the twist of his body tell Berkeley what emotions lay behind the words.

The two Galactics picked up their packs and swung them over their shoulders, and joined the waiting groups of their families.

Deric stayed where he was, watching them go, still trying to grasp what it was he had half-seen, half-understood. It was important, too, he knew. It explained, more than sadness, the silence that had overlaid the waiting room, the odd feeling that the Galactics were drawn apart into numerous small groups, each of them turning to his family and immediate friends.

As if they were in danger—

Fear! They were afraid! Morris, Berkeley—all of them.

He saw them reach the door and wait for their families to precede them. He coiled his muscles and slid forward in a rapid surge.

"Wait!"

Berkeley and Morris turned back toward him, their faces questioning.

"Where *are* you going?" Deric asked. "What are you going to do?"

"I don't know," Berkeley said. "I don't know," he repeated slowly. "We're being taken to Earth." And now Deric could plainly see the naked uncertainty in their eyes, the hesitation, the clammy tinge of fear.

"We have to get going," Morris said with sudden harshness—the harshness of nerves strained to the point where they sang and vibrated, waiting for the first new burden to snap and lash back with deadly effect.

Berkeley smiled at Deric—but there were white spots along his own jawline. He laid a gentle hand on Deric's neck. "I liked it here," he said wistfully. "I was born here, like my father was." He looked up, through the panes of the exit door, and, at that moment, the overcast finally broke, and the starlight flashed through.

Berkeley winced as though something had struck him. Then he shook himself and grinned—the fighting grin that was the Earthman's trademark. Nevertheless, there was something haunted in his voice as he said, "I wonder what Earth is like."

"Come on!" Morris said, and half-pushed Berkeley through the door. He raised a hand in a last farewell to Deric, and Berkeley, with Morris' hand on his shoulder, half turned, and waved apologetically for their friend's nervousness.

Deric looked after them, feeling the first beginnings of understanding trickle into his consciousness, knowing that the trickle would swell into a live, leaping torrent. When it came, he had better be very, very busy at some work that was unimportant enough to be spoiled by trembling hands or clouded vision.

What was it the dispatcher had said? "Farewell, Earthmen?" He shook his head in the acquired Terrestrial mannerism, turned, and slipped rapidly up the ramp to the observation platform. He watched the last of the Galactics walk into the waiting ship.

"Farewell, Voroseii," he said softly, as his brothers went unprotestingly into exile.

On this planet, no one could be sure that anyone else was real . . .

# HIGH SIGN

by Dave Dryfoos

(illustrated by Milton Luros)



**T**HIS WAS the Obliging Planet—the place where dreams came true. Dream of a steak, and there it was, sizzling hot and smothered in mushrooms. Dream of a girl...

Monty Rausch was very careful not to dream of girls. He found it hard to keep his mind on other things, being young and bored. But he tried; he had to try.

He was prospecting some of the

planet's wooded hills, photographing the vegetation in color, and simultaneously checking local variations in magnetism with a gadget that dangled from his overburdened little plane on the end of a long cable.

He was alone in his plane, and had to stay alone to avoid overburdening it to the point of disaster; so he kept his mind off things that might materialize into additional clutter. He flew back and forth and up and down over a small and uninteresting segment of terrain, going slowly nuts.

Then he saw the girl. He was pretty sure he hadn't dreamed her into existence because she had black hair and he mostly dreamed of blondes; but he wanted to be sure.

So he put his plane into a descending glide, and turned off his motor. He wasn't sneaking up on the girl—nothing like that. He turned off his motor to save fuel, and the fact that the girl happened to be sunbathing on her hilltop, and seemed to want all the sun she could get, was, he felt, totally irrelevant.

Shucks, if he'd wanted to spy on the kid he'd have planned to get closer; and if he'd planned to get closer, he'd have retracted that dangling cable.

And if he'd retracted the cable, Monty wouldn't have crashed. But the box on its end caught in a tree; the cable held, and his plane was jerked to the surface of the planet so fast that Monty Rausch never knew what part of the instrument-panel he hit his head on.

He awoke to the smell and crackle of the plane burning. Hands glided softly over his limbs. He tried opening his eyes. There was a little shriek, and by the time the world around him had stopped spinning, nothing was in sight but trees and rocks and sky and flaming wreckage.

He propped himself up on one el-

bow. A voice said, "Don't move; I'll be right back."

The voice was a girl's, and when she came back she was dressed, but he recognized her. She wore a simple yellow frock, woven of gnyttle and dyed with yl-juice. A settler, obviously; the material was as distinctive as linsey-woolsey.

She had very red lips and very blue eyes and a nice sunbrowned skin and hair like a raven's wing. Monty decided he didn't like blondes after all.

"Hello," he said tentatively.

"Hello, yourself; feel all right now?"

"Sure." He sat up shakily, and she helped him to his feet and brushed off his jumper with a long-fingered hand.

Meanwhile she said, "I'm sorry. I dreamed of someone in a little plane, and there you were; so I dreamed you'd come and see me—but I never did dream you'd crash. Should have known, though—there's no place around here where you could have landed safely."

"But I'm human!" Monty insisted. "My name is Monty Rausch and I'm a pilot for United Metals; I'm in a mess, but it's not your fault—you didn't cause me to crash. And for that matter, how do I know you're human? You look like a dream."

SHE GIGGLED and offered her hand to be shaken and said she was Martha Grey. "This is an odd planet, isn't it?" she went on. "Particularly for the young. When my Daddy dreams, it's always of Earth, so you can tell. But with me—well, he gets so mad, sometimes! He doesn't want me dreaming of boys, you know. I—I'm afraid he may not be very nice to you."

"Well, maybe I don't have to see him," said Monty. "Could you take

me some place where I could send a message?"

"Home. That's all. There's no one but Daddy and me within twenty miles."

"Oh. Well—" He assayed a few careful steps. "I can walk, all right; don't seem much hurt at all. Was I thrown clear of the plane?"

"No."

"Oh. So you went into the burning wreck and dragged me out. Were you hurt doing it?"

"Not at all; it was nothing. Lean on me, and I'll guide you home."

He refused to lean on her and walked by himself, sitting down to rest every once in a while. He'd been badly shaken up, and his head ached.

He thought of horses, once, and a dun mare came and nuzzled at him, but he sent it away without bothering to mount; dreams on this planet affected only the senses, and he'd have gotten no rest trying to ride.

"I rode one, once," he explained to Martha. "Dreamed up a horse and rode for ten miles and wound up with blisters on my heels, of all places."

"I know. You just think something is happening, and it isn't. When I was little, we didn't have any water laid on and I hated to fetch enough for a bath, so I used to dream up fancy perfumes, and Daddy would get mad. 'Dirt is dirt,' he'd say, 'even if you can't smell it.' Poor Daddy!"

"What's poor about him?"

"Well, you know, he used to be a professor of English and he came up here to try and write, and took up land. Then my mother died, and what with taking care of the farm and of me, he's done no writing. And he's no farmer."

"Maybe he could use a man around the place," Monty said, half jokingly. "It's a cinch I'm going to have to look for a job."

"Do you know how to take care of glamnas?"

"Never even saw one, up close."

"Well, when we get home, I'll take you to the barn and show you."

It sounded like a good idea, but at the moment Monty felt that if he got into a warm barn and found some soft hay, he'd sleep for a week. The trail down which Martha led him had followed an open ridge for some distance; now it dropped steeply through the gloomy purple getta trees, whose nuts were like so many ball-bearings under foot. Three times Monty fell awkwardly and heavily. Once more, and he thought his aching head might break off his neck, roll down the slope, and get lost. He didn't think he'd mind.

AT THE bottom of the descent, where a natural pasture of kuzi moss showed signs of grazing, Martha's father waited with a rifle in his hand.

"Oh, Daddy!" Martha wailed. "He's real! You mustn't shoot him!"

"You've said that before—and been mistaken about it," Mr. Grey said, raising his gun. "Wish him gone, or I'll destroy him."

"She can't!" said Monty. "I'm a man, not a dream! I can prove it. Wait!"

"Didn't you hear his plane, Daddy?" Martha demanded.

"Sure I heard it," Mr. Grey said, lowering the gun uncertainly. "But you must have dreamed up the plane, too. I know he couldn't have landed around here—not with a real plane. Not unless it was a copter and came down in this pasture."

"But he crashed! He crashed and the plane burned. He needs help, Daddy!"

"Crashed, burned—and lived?"

"Yes, sir," said Monty. "She pulled me out. I'm human and can prove it."

"How?"

"Well—" He hadn't the faintest idea. "You—uh—you could give me a

physical examination, sir."

"That would prove nothing, and you know it. Each characteristic I might wish to find would automatically appear. You'll have to think of something else."

*Of what else?* Monty wondered. How could he prove he was human? How did he even know he was human?

He looked helplessly at Martha. She looked speculatively back. Suddenly her eyes began to sparkle.

"I know a test," she said, jumping in excitement. "I know a test that's real simple. And it's literary, Daddy—you'll like it. Something that Mark Twain is said to have said."

"What is it?" the two men chorused.

"I can't give it away, can I?" she asked reasonably. "But Daddy, if you'll go back to the house and put away your gun, Monty and I will go to the barn, and—"

"Barn?" Mr. Grey was incredulous—and irate. "Just what have you got in mind?"

He looked from one to the other. Martha blushed. Monty, in sympathy, blushed also. He opened his mouth to explain that all he wanted in the barn was to see the animals, and then he snapped his jaw shut again.

He couldn't say that without making Martha seem— Well, alone like this, all these years, maybe she was—

He got redder and redder as he thought about it. So did Martha. And so, staring angrily, did Mr. Grey.

"See?" said Martha, suddenly. "It's what Mark Twain said: 'Man is the only animal that blushes.' He's real! I've proved it! Come on, Monty—I'll show you the glannas."

For the first time since Monty'd met him, Mr. Grey smiled. He thrust out his hand for Monty to shake.

"All right," he said. "I guess I won't shoot. Come on down to the house and I'll send out a few messages for you."

He chuckled. "You know, we've never had a young pilot stay with us, and I'm afraid Martha may find the experience a little overwhelming. I mean, I'd as soon you two don't spend too much time in the barn unless I'm there, too."

"Daddy!" Martha gasped. "How could you?"

Mr. Grey laughed and pushed Monty ahead of him down the path toward a tree-shaded cabin. "It's your fault," he said to Martha. "You brought it up, and you made him blush. Besides, you misquoted Mark Twain—or misunderstood him."

"What did he really say, sir?" Monty asked.

"'Man is the only animal that blushes—or needs to.' So you'd better explain your need, young man!"

Half an hour later, Monty was still earnestly trying to do so. The effort made him redder than ever.



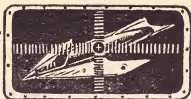
Featured in the  
current issue of

**A Powerful Novelet of  
People Who Chose to be**

**THE IRRATIONALS**

by Milton Lesser

**SCIENCE FICTION  
QUARTERLY**



## INSIDE SCIENCE FICTION

A Department For The Science Fictionist

by Robert A. Madle

### SCIENCE FICTION SPOTLIGHT

**NEWS AND VIEWS:** The Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society recently held its 830th meeting, and new officers were elected as follows; Mel Hunter (sensational new cover artist) is the new director; Thelma Hamm, Secretary; Forry Ackerman and E. Everett Evans became Senior Committeeman and Junior Committeeman, respectively. Many active fans might comment that this election is merely further evidence that the "professionals" are taking over the "fan world." However, if they investigate the subject more than superficially, it will become evident to them that all four "professionals" mentioned are fans first, professionals second. We firmly believe that there is far too much comment concerning the differentiation between "fans" and "pros." The fans of yesteryear are the professionals of today. Therefore, it is logical to assume that the fans of today will be the professionals of tomorrow. Keep these thoughts in mind, fellows, when you are about to criticize or condemn a fan function because professional writers are partially administering it.

Collectors who delight in dressing up their books are advised to communicate with Fantasy Press, 120 N. 9th Street, Reading, Pennsylvania. Eshbach has printed some very attractive book-plates which were designed by Edd Cartier, Hannes Bok, and other well-known s-f artists... Allen Glasser, editor of *The Time Traveler* back in 1932 (s-f's first fanzine) is attempting to obtain a complete run of this publication. Anyone having copies of TTT are requested to communicate with Glasser at 71 Tehama Street, Brooklyn 18, New York... Abner J. Gelula, a writer whose stories you have read of in "Twen-

ty Years Ago in S-F," now heads a large advertising agency with branches in Philadelphia and Atlantic City... Hannes Bok's cover on the June number of *Fantasy Fiction* originally illustrated "The Black Wheel," an unfinished A. Merritt novel, completed and illustrated by Bok in 1947.

Today, a magazine supplement of the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, printed a double-page feature article on the Philadelphia Science Fiction Society and the 11th World Science Fiction Convention in its August 9th issue... The annual London S-F Convention was held May 23-24. In addition to prominent European personalities, also present were Bea Mahaffey, co-editor of *Science Stories* (formerly *Other Worlds*) and L. Ron Hubbard. Other editors present were; Nic Oosterbaan (Holland's *Planeet*); Georges Gallet (Paris) Peter Hamilton (Scotland's *Nebula*); and Ted Carnell (England's *New Worlds*)... Australia also held a convention May 1-8 with an attendance of more than eighty. Veteran fans Vol Molesworth and W. D. Veney are to be congratulated on their fine effort.

**Operation Dixie:** This is to inform the fan world in general that your columnist is now permanently located in Charlotte, North Carolina. Yes, after two decades of s-f activity in Philadelphia we were compelled tearfully to resign as President of the PSFS (for business reasons) and wend our way southward. Now that we are part of Southern Fandom (geographically, at least) we would enjoy letters from anyone in or around Charlotte interested in forming an informal s-f discussion group. The address is 1825 Academy Street, Charlotte, N. C.

**From the World of Books;** Fredrie Brown is rapidly completing a new novel, as yet untitled.... "Nightmare Brother,"

perhaps Alan E. Nourse's best story to date, will appear in a new anthology to be edited by Wm. Sloane and published by Frederick Watts.... Another forthcoming anthology will be "Science and Sorcery" (Fantasy Publishing Co., Inc.). Sam Moskowitz will be represented with an original short story, "The Lost Chord." Others will be "Naming of Names" by Bradbury, "Scanners Live in Vain" by Cordwainer Smith, "Escape to Yesterday" (previously unpublished) by Stanton A. Coblentz, and stories by Burks, George Cowie, and others.... Paul Orban will do the jacket for A. E. van Vogt's unpublished novel, "The Universe Maker." This will be a pocketbook from Ace, scheduled for October release.... "Mr. Science Fiction" will soon be associated with several books (hardcover and pocketbook).... Mel Hunter has done the dust-wrappers for Murray Leinster's "Space Tug" (Shasta), E. E. Evans' "Man of Many Minds" and Eric Frank Russell's "Deep Space" (Fantasy Press).... August Derleth is working on another anthology—this one to contain all unpublished material. "Keeper of the Dream" by Charles Beaumont and "Blight" by Jean Cox will probably be included.

*The Scientifilms:* All opinion to the contrary, we feel that Warner Brothers' "The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms" to be a commendable effort in the realm of s-f cinema offerings. There is nothing new or startling in the treatment of this throwback to "King Kong," and the entire picture is the Beast, which cost WB \$25,000 to construct. Ray Harryhausen (old-time s-f fan, member of LASFS, and "King Kong" enthusiast extraordinary) does remarkably well with the technical effects (the Beast is his baby). The story is secondary (almost irrelevant, in fact) and is an adaptation of Ray Bradbury's *Saturday Evening Post* story of the same title. If you liked "King Kong," you'll enjoy this Warner Bros.-Harryhausen-Bradbury collaboration.

Lovers of A. Merritt will never realize how close they came to seeing a screen-version of "The Ship of Ishtar." It seems that the Merritt estate wanted more cash than the interested filmmaker would offer.... Warner Brothers is considering purchasing "The Hunting Season" by Frank M. Robinson.... Mel Hunter is Technical Advisor for "Time of Terror," two scientifilms in one. They are written and produced by s-f fan Rick Strauss; one four dimensional, the other space-opera.

## TWENTY YEARS AGO IN SCIENCE FICTION

WITH ITS January 1934 issue, *As-tounding Stories* made evident to all that it intended to outclass its two competitors and assume command of the science fiction field. As discussed in the Jan-

uary *Dynamic Science Fiction*, the third issue of *As-tounding* under the Street & Smith banner (December, 1933) was a decided improvement over the preceding issues, and it was with this issue that the first "thought-variant" story appeared. ("Ancestral Voices" by Nat Schachner.)

Donald Wandrei's novelette of great concept, "Colossus," was featured by Howard V. Brown on the cover of the January, 1934 *As-tounding*. The cover was fair, but the story it illustrated was considered a classic in 1934; and even today it still retains that appellation. Wandrei, inspired by Sir Arthur Eddington's "The Expanding Universe," described Duane Sharon's colossal feat of exceeding the speed of light in a rocket-ship, and how he smashed the barriers of our universe, and entered a super-universe of which our entire scheme of things is about an atom.

While the basic premise was not original (G. Peyton Wertenbaker's "Man From The Atom," and Ray Cummings' "Explorers Into Infinity" preceded it by many years), Wandrei's treatment of the theme and his method of reaching the super-universe was startlingly original. Readers acclaimed "Colossus" as follows: "It is great, wonderful, a marvel of imagination.... It is an idea of that sort which will finally help to win the Goals of Man.... "Colossus" was colossal.... I am sure that this story was an accident because I do not think them (the s-f authors) capable of such a story."

Other stories in this exceptional issue were "Redmask of the Outlands," a novelette of the city-states of the year 5000 (This was merely a historical story projected into the future—quite interesting, however); the conclusion of Charles Willard Diffin's adventure-serial of an invisible world above the earth, "Land of the Lost"; and there were fair-to-average short stories by Stanton A. Coblentz, S. Gordon Gurwit, Jack Williamson, and A. Rowley Hilliard. Interior illustrations were by Orban, Marchioni, and Brown. Jack Darrow and Bob Tucker were among the letter writers in "Brass Tacks."

The cover story of the January, 1934 *Wonder Stories* was "Moon Plague" by Raymond Z. Gallum. Frank R. Paul's astronomical-type cover was excellent but the story (it dealt with plant life on Luna) was just average. Richard Vaughan's long three-part novel, "The Exile of the Skies," started and told of Knute Savary (the greatest scientist of the 23rd Century) and how he was exiled from Earth for attempting to assume command of the entire planet. Knute (along with Nadja, the girl-scientist who loved and betrayed him—and then stowed-away on the exile ship) travelled about the solar system meeting strange races of creatures, saving races from destruction, and eventually become the salvation of Earth. This story, had it appeared several



years prior to 1934, would have been recognized as one of the few interplanetary classics. It was reprinted recently, in the Summer 1950 *Fantastic Story Quarterly*.

J. Harvey Haggard concluded "Evolution Satellite" and there were other short stories of varying merit by Duane N. Carroll ("When Reptiles Ruled"—a short-short which depicted the battle for survival in the Mesozoic Era), Rice Ray, F. Golub, Leo am Bruhl, and Donald A. Wohlheim. The stories by Golub and Bruhl were German translations which should have remained untranslated. Wohlheim told of a visitor to Earth ("The Man from Ariel") which didn't overwhelm the readers at the time, but was the catalyst which created quite a reaction in the science fiction field a year later. Charles D. Hornig, the amazing teen-age Managing Editor, outlined "Our New Policy" in which he said: "NEW plots; NEW theories; NEW action; N<sup>W</sup>W characterization: ... *Wonder Stories* is attempting a RADICAL REVOLUTION in science-fiction, and we hope that 1934 will be set down as the year of the GREAT CHANGE in scientific literature!" And, with all apologies to Groff Conklin and his adherents who saw no change in s-f until after 1940, 1934 was the year in which s-f underwent a metamorphosis.

NOT TO BE outdone completely by its rivals, *Amazing Stories* started 1934 off with a better-than-average January number. Leo Morey's cover illustrated "Triplanetary" by Dr. E. E. Smith and was a welcome relief from the usual dull, lifeless covers, so typical of T. O'Connor Sloane's *Amazing*. "Triplanetary" was the beginning of the fabulous "Lensman" series and introduced Steve Costigan, Gray Roger, Ralph Kinnison, et cetera. This series is well-known to all readers of s-f and ranks with the "Skylark" series among the classics of science fiction. "Triplanetary" was the only novel in the "Lensman" group which did not appear in *Astounding*—and, curiously enough, it would have appeared thus, except for a strange series of circumstances. Briefly, it was to appear in the March, 1933 *Astounding* (the last under Clayton Magazines) and Wesso's cover for that issue really illustrates it. However, the entire Clayton chain collapsed with this issue, and the serial was deleted at the last moment. The story was then submitted to *Wonder Stories* where, amazingly enough, it was rejected! Had *Wonder* accepted "Triplanetary," it is conceivable that the following novels would have appeared in the same magazine—but this is mere conjecture, inasmuch as none of the following "Lensman" series were published by *Amazing*.

The other stories in this issue were by Harl Vincent, Isaac Nathanson, P. Schuy-

ler Miller, Joe W. Skidmore, and David H. Keller. None were of any merit except for Skidmore's "Adventures of Posi and Nega," which told more of the heroic electrons, and Keller's "The Lost Language." This was a yarn which told of a young boy who could not speak our language and could only understand an ancient Welsh dialect, a story of inherited memory—told only as Dr. Keller could tell it. Illustrations were exclusively Morey. Among the letters in "Discussions" was one from Lester Anderson, publicizing the International Scientific Association—one of the earliest of fan-experimenter groups.

1934 was, indeed, becoming the year of great change. The January issues of all three publications displayed improvement and innovations—and the voice of a very young fandom also appeared in brand-new garb. It was *Science Fiction Digest* no longer—it was *Fantasy Magazine* now! And, of course, the "New Policy" was discussed in which it was explained that the magazine would cover all fields of fantastic literature—and would no longer limit itself exclusively to s-f. January FM sported a neat cover by Clay Ferguson illustrating the initial installment of "Scientific Hoaxes" by Julius Schwartz and Milton Kaletsky. *Connoisseurs* of 1934 found this series quite informative, and readers of today would also look with favor on it. All of the newshounds (Weisinger, Schwartz, Ray Palmer, Ackerman) were present, and Edmond Hamilton offered his autobiography. Chapter Eight of "Cosmos" was authored by Otis A. Kline & E. Hoffmann Price, and there were other stories by Ray Palmer and Francis Flagg & Forry Ackerman. A commendable issue.

## THE FANZINES

FANZINES of all sizes, shapes, and methods of publication appear on the scene with amazing regularity. Several will collapse, only to be replaced by just as many new ventures. It has always been thus in the fan world: the desire of youthful fantasy-adherents to make themselves heard above the din of the multitude—and almost invariably this intensive craving to edit, write, and publish wanes after a short duration of time. But the resigning fan-editor usually realizes that his venture has been one blessed with fruition—he has derived a wealth of experience, fun, and friendship from his short-lived publication.

Most first issues of fan-publications are not too noteworthy, and suffer from the inexperience of the editor. Occasionally, however, a magazine appears which immediately takes its place among the leaders in the field. Such a fanzine is *Fan Warp* (20¢ from Lyle Kessler, 2450-76

Avenue, Philadelphia 38, Pa.). Issue #1 contains thirty neatly-multilithed pages, chock full of articles and fiction of interest to the general reader. The highlight of the issue is Robert Bloch's hilarious burlesque, "How to Attend a Science Fiction Convention." We often wonder how Brother Bloch continues to turn out humorous articles of high merit with such rapidity. David H. Keller is represented with an article on "The Fanzine," which, although imparting nothing new, is replete with Keller sentimentalism. Among the other writers are Alan E. Nourse, Basil Wells, and Mari Wolf; the artwork of Levin, Swanson, and Hopkins is topnotch. Make sure you give this one a fling!

Also from Philadelphia is *Starmag* (10¢ from George J. Viksnins, 4152 Parkside Avenue, Philadelphia 4, Pa.). This one contains 20 hektographed pages and leaves room for a great deal of improvement. Even so, it has its redeeming features: Lyle Kessler's "Fandom's Highlights" is a readable, informative column, and the current issue contains a short but thorough survey of the professional s-f magazine field by Henry Moskowitz. Improved artwork would help considerably.

Fanzines come and fanzines go but *Fantasy Times* apparently goes on forever. This breezy, informative news-sheet is now in its twelfth year and displays no signs of dissolution. If you want to know what's happening in the s-f world (often before it actually happens) send for a copy of FT. The editorial staff of FT specializes in advance professional magazine-news, convention coverage, and book-news. Send 10¢ to James V. Taurasi, 137-03 32nd Avenue, Flushing 54, New York for a sample copy. It's well worth it.

A publication which has been with us a long time is *Science Fiction News Letter*

(20¢ from Bob Tucker, Box 702, Bloomington, Illinois). Unfortunately Bob (who is prominent novelist Wilson Tucker) finds himself with an ever-decreasing amount of spare time, and plans to publish only two more issues. We are indeed grieved by this pronouncement for the demise of SFNL will leave a niche in the amateur fantasy field which shall remain unfilled. We shall miss Tucker's subtle humor and his tongue-in-cheek manner of news-presentation. However, it will not surprise us if, sometime in the future, a new fanzine with the Tucker by-line finds its way to our mailbox—for Tucker has published fan mags for two decades. He's too far gone to stop now! At any rate, send for the final two issues of SFNL: it is photo-off-set, it is mature, it is analytical—and it is highly recommended.

*Science Fiction News* comes all the way from G. B. Stone, Box 4788, G. P. O., Sydney, N. S. W., Australia. It is professionally printed, a monthly, and 50¢ should bring you the next half-dozen issues. Featured in the one we have at hand is a write-up on the recent Second Australian Science Fiction Convention, a scientifilm column by (you guessed it!) Forry Ackerman, and a department on foreign s-f clubs. Several photographs help make this recent innovation a worthwhile effort. Try it!

Fan publications are requested for review. Naturally, we cannot review all of them each issue; if your fanzine hasn't been discussed as yet, you may rest assured that we'll include it in a future department. Send all publications to Robert A. Madle, 1825 Academy Street, Charlotte, N. C.



"I'm certainly amazed that you Earth people look like us Martians — on the left is our women's dormitory."

No longer did mankind send its finest young men out en masse to be slaughtered in war. Now the nations chose a single champion to fight when disputes could not be settled peacefully. But the champions' combat employed forces powerful enough to destroy the planet . . .



# THE PENULTIMATE WEAPON

A Fable of Futurity

by Theodore L. Thomas

*(illustration by C. A. Murphy)*

**A**T THE SOUND of the signal, the two ships rose up from opposite sides of the earth. Each of them swiftly blasted to the outer reaches of the ionosphere; neither wanted the other to have the advantage of height. Not until they were a full two hundred and fifty miles high did they begin to seek each other out. Not until then did the single man aboard each ship turn his attention

to the business at hand. Not until then did the fight begin.

The shorter ship made the first pass. Its pilot locked the ship on a great circle route that was planned to carry him past the other's probable location. But in a few short minutes he saw he had guessed wrong. The other ship was too far off to one side; it was waiting motionless just below the band of bright sunshine. Its instru-

ments warned of the approaching attack and its pilot slowly turned the bow to meet it.

A violet ray danced from the bow of the waiting ship as the attacker swept by five hundred miles away. The beam was accurate. As it caressed the speeding ship a brilliant flare of blue-white light erupted. The very sun dimmed out. Yet the ship passed through unharmed. Glowing hot, and wobbling slightly, it twisted on its axis and tossed back a glancing defiant beam of its own. And down on the earth half the world's population clapped their hands with relief, while the other half gasped in disappointment.

The two ships settled down to a duel that carried them over the entire face of the earth. Time and again the deadly beams lanced out—only to be turned into harmless light by the powerful converter shields. Every so often, an inaccurate ray licked over the face of the earth. Whatever it touched it destroyed: Whole forests burst into flame; cities toppled; and great lakes of molten rock sprang to life. But the people of the two nations hidden deep in the earth, were untouched. An occasional teleter was destroyed, but this had been foreseen. There were enough more so that each nation could continue to watch the battle between the two champions.

The two ships moved slower now. The two pilots had found that high maneuverability was a liability; the shields on each ship were so strong that even a direct and lingering hit meant little. So the two ships settled down to slugging it out a bare fifty miles apart. Everything depended now on the weapons rather than the men; everything depended on the fruits of seventy thousand years of science. At least, so it seemed.

The ships were two miles high over Unland. The longer one suddenly shot down to try and pass underneath and then come up in the rear of the

short one. But as it skimmed the ground, the shorter ship stood on its bow and poured a beam straight down. A hole ten feet in diameter appeared in the earth. Deeper and deeper it sank. Vaporized rock spewed forth from it as it sank ever deeper. An incredible roar shook the surrounding hills, a roar whose pitch sank lower as the hole sank deeper. And into this surging column of escaping gases blundered the low-flying ship.

It flicked aloft, carried on the seething turbulent column of gas, momentarily out of control. The other ship moved aside, then darted at it from underneath. The full force of its beam lashed out from a distance of fifty yards.

Many a teleter burned out from the brilliancy of the light; the automatic filters failed to drop into place fast enough. For a full second the shield resisted. Then it failed.

The longer ship exploded in a searing blast of flame that fused the earth three miles below. The shock-wave struck the other ship and hurled it to the ground; and as it hit it too blew up; a six-mile crater and twisting, writhing flames were all that remained.

NOW, THE watchers beneath the earth strained forward. Each side thought that the other was in for a surprise; each side was right.

For out of the towering and terrible aftermath of the two mighty blasts emerged two tiny figures, two figures that settled down through the vapors and gases until their feet rested on the earth.

The secret was out. Each side possessed the transwarp body-shield; each champion was equipped with this most incredible of devices. Built into the nervous system, the transwarpor drew energy from any available source. It tapped sunlight; it utilized magnetic waves; it absorbed heat, and it converted any matter into its equiv-

alence of energy. The entire output of the transwarpor was controlled by the mind of the wearer. Wherever he willed the power, there it went. And here were two men, two transwarpormen, facing each other; the battle had just begun.

The world fearfully settled back to watch. It had seemed so simple a moment before. Each side had been convinced of victory; each side had thought itself the sole possessor of the transwarpor. But now... And the people shuddered. This ultimate weapon in the hands of the two opponents was capable of destroying the Earth itself.

Wars had been abolished fifty thousand years ago to save the Earth from destruction; conflicts were resolved by individual combat between champions. But a single transwarpor could convert the entire Earth into sheer energy. And the two of them, trying to outdo each other, spelled certain doom to the human race.

Signals flashed between the two nations. Call it off. Call it off. We surrender. Call it off before it's too late.

But it *was* too late.

The two men stood a few miles apart; a single mountain-range separated them. One of them stretched forth his hand. The entire range glowed and fumed and melted and sagged and flowed down into a monstrous lake of lava.

They were in plain sight of each other now. Instantly the air between them took on a violent hue as prodigious waves of energy travelled from one to the other. The men themselves faded from sight, masked by the inconceivable wall of energy each threw up. Each striking beam was absorbed and returned tenfold. A channel of bubbling hissing molten rock swiftly formed a pathway between them. And down the path the men began to move, drifting ever closer, floating atop the molten rock.

At a distance of a mile apart the

broad pathway between had eaten a thousand yards down into the earth. The men moved aside to get out of the channel. They drifted closer. The ozone concentration grew so high that fused silicates burned spontaneously.

At five hundred yards the heat grew more intense. The earth, relieved of a vast weight in that one area, readjusted itself. A violent earthquake tremor shook the world. The air, heated till it glowed, rose straight up. Cooler air poured in from the sides with hurricane force. And as the men got closer the fire storm got worse. Titanic waves arose on the nearby sea. The entire world was gently trembling from earthquake-shocks as the crust readjusted itself.

THE TWO men stood in the center of a hundred-mile-wide pit that reached two miles into the earth. The sea broke through and cascaded over the white-hot lava. The steam was caught up in the fire storm and hurled high into the stratosphere where it condensed. Torrential rain fell over half the world.

Ten feet apart they were. Then five, then two. At arms length they poured impossible energies against the impenetrable shields.

The people waited for the end. The Earth was in its death-throes. The screens were blank; no teleters remained in the area. But the continuous earth-shocks, the violent storm that now raged everywhere, the fast-changing atmosphere, all told the story. And the people wept.

They wept so bitterly that they didn't notice it at first. Then one head, then another, lifted to listen. Unbelievably they stared at each other. The weeping died away. All the people listened until there could no longer be any doubt.

The storm was subsiding; the winds were fading. Even the earth tremors grew less violent. They listened until

there could be no doubt. The battle had ended.

Joyously they rushed to the screens. But the screens showed nothing at first. Only the murky and dust-laden atmosphere. Still they watched.

And finally they saw them. The two champions emerged from the hazy portion of the globe into comparative light. But they did not walk together; instead, one carried the other.

The battle had ended as it should. One man died, one lived. As the screens grew clearer each side recognized its own champion; each recognized the dead and the living.

But there was no joy in the victors, and little sorrow in the vanquished. The end had been too close for anyone to feel anything but a deep abiding thankfulness. Every man knew in his heart that conflict was gone from the earth. Mankind had another chance, and it was gratefully accepted.

So the people watched the victor gently deposit the body of the dead man on a hillside. Then he turned and went away to rejoin his own people.

**T**HE VANQUISHED people waited a full day before going out into the air to reclaim the body. And as they waited they thought. The full import of what had happened began to dawn on them.

The transwarp shield was impenetrable; it could turn aside energy of inconceivable intensity. It was the most potent force man could devise;

no known weapon could smash it. Yet a transwarpman lay dead. Something had penetrated the impenetrable. The other side possessed an even more deadly weapon, one that nothing could stop.

Finally the vanquished people went out. They flew to where their dead champion lay. And as they landed and drew close around him, they saw the weapon that had killed him.

Strange and terrible it seemed, like nothing they had ever seen before. Small it was, alien, shiny, and still attached to the body. The transwarp shield withstood the heat-beam, the neutron-beam; it even withstood the larino ray; it turned all energy aside. Yet this slim and short device penetrated—penetrated with such mighty force that even the red body-fluids oozed out. No man there had ever before seen such a sight. So they stood there unbelieving, uncomprehending.

They stood there, awestruck at the fearsome might of the new weapon. And among them, as bewildered as the others, stood Inus, old and wise, the most learned of men.

He looked; puzzled and bewildered. But then his expression changed. He thought. He passed his hand over his brow in the intensity of his concentration. Slowly the bewilderment passed. His eyes widened. He spoke.

"I know it. I seem to remember. In our mifilm archives I once saw it. The weapon—it is not new; it is from the ancients, fifty milles ago. They called it—let me think—they called it—yes. They called it—a knife."



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by Poul Anderson

**DYNAMIC**

**SCIENCE  
FICTION**

## DOWN TO EARTH (continued from page 8)

I wrote few letters (protesting the playing-down and then the dropping of the word "science" in the title of *Science Wonder Stories*, for example) but one was finally published in the July 1932 issue of *Wonder Stories*. In it, I was defending science fiction against some character named Schwartz (not Julius Schwartz, unless he was using a pseudonym at the time) who wrote one of the early epistles denouncing science fiction as drivel for "wide-mouthed but not wide-awake youths". (The letter appeared with my name misspelled, Isaac, if you're reading.)

There was a bit of correspondence in 1931 with various letter-writers in *Astounding*, but I didn't really start on any scale until the Science Fiction League got going in 1934. Virginia Kidd and George W. Greene and Virginia Parker were among my correspondents in that year, and I jumped on Bob Tucker's bandwagon for the anti-staple proposition in the great Staple War of 1935. It wasn't until 1936 that I met such fans as Donald A. Wollheim, Frederik Pohl, William S. Sykora, John B. Michel, Walter Kubi- lius, and others; then, at the 1937 Washington's Birthday ISA convention, I met James Blish and Robert A. Madle, among many others.

The ISA was the second club I joined and my first fan contribution was to the famous *International Observer*. (As I recall, that issue was so poorly mimeographed as to be virtually unreadable—which is just as well.)

The greatest period of fan-activity for me, were the years 1937 to 1941—though I continued into 1945, my initial editorial experience having come between. Early story-sales were to Frederik Pohl (*Super Science Stories*). F. Orlin Tremaine (*Comet*) and Donald A. Wollheim (*Stirring Science Stories* and *Cosmic Science Fiction*),

under such pen-names as Wilfred Owen Morley, and Mallory Kent, as well as my own name.

Editing started late in 1940, when I managed to get a chance at editing *Future Fiction* and *Science Fiction Quarterly*. My first issue was the April 1941 *Future Fiction*; before it appeared I had learned that I didn't know as much about editing as I thought I did. Before our science-fiction magazines suspended, due to paper shortages during the war (and the fact that western, detective, sports, love, and air-war were selling far better), I found that no one could possibly know as much about editing as I had thought I knew in my fans days.

At the time I accepted an offer to handle all the Columbia pulps, it seemed like a let-down from science-fiction; now I realize that if the present round of my science fiction issues are better than the ones of 1940 it is largely due to experience obtained in handling other types of fiction; back then, I was bringing out glorified fan magazines.

Today, I believe I'm one of the very few science-fiction editors whose acquaintance with the medium (in magazines) goes back to the Gernsback *Amazing Stories*; the other editors are John W. Campbell Jr. and Raymond A. Palmer. I think that this continuity has a great deal to do with Campbell's excellent handling of *Astounding*; other things being equal, (ie: editorial talent and desire to bring out as high quality a magazine as possible) I think there is no substitute for familiarity with the science fiction magazine field from its inception. A number of men who were and are excellent editors, per se, have shown weakness due to lack of such familiarity.

Enough of me, now. Let's talk about our authors.



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## FUTURE Science Fiction

WARD MOORE, author of "Greener Than You Think", first appeared in science-fiction magazines with "Sword of Peace" in the March 1950 issue of *Amazing Stories*; his short satire "We, the People", which appeared in the May 1952 *Science Fiction Quarterly*, has been anthologized, and his novel, "Bring the Jubilee" has just been released by Ballantine. Moore reminds me somewhat of Stanton A. Coblenz, who was the satirist of the '30s in science fiction, although I think Moore's material is on a considerably higher level of all-around excellence.

ALGIS BUDRYS has received a lively reaction to his short story, "Stand Watch in the Sky", in our September issue. He seems to be living up to the promise of his first stories, and I'll risk the prediction that he'll be an author to watch for some time to come.

DAVE DRYFOOS has been away from this magazine since his "Facts of Life" appeared in our September 1951 issue; I hope we'll see him again sooner.



RUSS WINTERBOTHAM hasn't been around very much in the pages of science-fiction magazines in recent years. You liked his "Winning of Wooha" in our November 1952 issue, and the name of R. R. Winterbotham will be familiar to science-fiction readers of the years between 1935 and 1943. He first appeared in the August 1935 issue of *Astounding Stories*, with a short tale entitled "The Star That Would Not Behave".

[Turn To Page 88]

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## FUTURE Science Fiction

THEODORE L. THOMAS is another newcomer; he first appeared in the September 1952 issue of *Space Science Fiction* with "The Revisor."

## Letters

### STOWAWAY SALVATION

by Noah W. McLeod

Dear Mr. Lowndes:

I have finished reading the September number of *Future*, and I must express my enthusiasm over Cox's yarn, "To Save A World." This story was as logically-developed as anything in the three-cent-a word magazines. To begin with, the idea that the fear of atomic war would be mostly concentrated in the cities seems to be very close to the actual truth as of today. From there, the story proceeds logically step by step. Satellite Stations would increase this fear to the point of hysteria, which would only need the proper leader to bring out in the open. I appreciated, too, the very clever use to which Cox put the vagaries of the American electoral system. The idea of saving the final outbreak of mob fury for after election, when Bowman's followers realized that the election of a President would be thrown into the House of Representatives, was original.

Bowman, too, was well-drawn, as a kindly misguided idealist, not as a ranting, sadistic Fuehrer.

Your answer to my remarks about "Ecological Onslaught" on pp. 88-89 of Sept. *Future* suggests a possible central idea for a space opera. The early expeditions to Mars and Venus fail because the crews go crazy. The directors of the project are at their wits' end because of the threatened withdrawal of government support. But some girls stow away on the last expedition, which is a success. Do you think Vance could write a yarn around that idea without bringing down the

## DOWN TO EARTH

wrath of the censors on your head and his? I should like very much to see what Vance could make of it.

But keep on going, Mr. Lowndes. *Future* gets better every issue.

—Christine, North Dakota

Brother Vance is welcome to try, although I'm doubtful that the girl-stow-away theme can be handled so that it seems fresh and original. Perhaps a sex-changing machine on alternate current would be better. Every week, half the men take a treatment and become female, then as was wimmin last time reverting to their original sex. The story is handled as a mystery, seeing as how it plays hob with the memory and, before the voyage is over, some of the crew are dubious as to which they ought to be. This, you see, is brought on by the appearance of the gal stowaways; they heard about the machine, and since they never liked being female, decided to take advantage of the situation. They'll mutiny and grab the machine. Hero (or heroine, we can't be sure) is trying to figure out how he (or she) started out, and whether (he) (she) wants to revert permanently. All perfectly legitimate, I might add, because the crew all signed papers marrying each other before the voyage started.

## AUTHORITIES AT TWO PACES

by Leo Louis Martello

Dear Mr. Lowndes:

I heartily appreciate your fairness in enabling me to respond to the Theosophical Editors' letter in Nov. *Future*, but for me to answer each point separately would take up too much space. So here's my brief rebuttal:

Naturally, I quote authorities who agree with me. So did the Theosophical Editors, harping on the ones quoted in the *San Francisco Chronicle*. The majority of opinion is that crime *cannot* be committed under hypnosis. I'll admit it's possible—just as I'll admit anything is possible—but as yet there's no concrete, substantial proof. And in the harsh light of science we must stick to proven and provable facts—a few isolated cases do not constitute a scientifically-acceptable theorem.

I haven't "ignored" the authorities  
[Turn Page]



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## FUTURE Science Fiction

The Editors mentioned. It's just that  
in my work the names mentioned are  
not the outstanding ones in hypnotic  
literature. If I'm wrong in my state-  
ments then so are Alfred Adler, Sig-  
mund Freud, Dr. Lewis R. Wolberg,  
Kark Menninger and countless others  
whose theories on hypnosis are the  
same as my own. And it is quite pre-  
sumptuous of the Editors to say that  
"Mr. Martello as a witness is disquali-  
fied." On what do they base that?  
The fact that I will not sacrifice my  
convictions to agree with their own.  
The analogies they use are clever  
ones; but it doesn't make them right.

I've conducted numerous hypnotic  
experiments: In one I had a deeply-  
hypnotized girl plunge a rubber knife  
into the chest of a male student. When  
I substituted the rubber knife for a  
real one and gave it to her (with-  
out telling her what I did) and told  
her to stab the same student she hesi-  
tated, shook her head, resisted and  
finally threw the real knife down. I've  
done countless other experiments, so  
I don't have to "appeal to authority;"  
I do so to show what others have  
written on the subject.

I find Robert A. Madle's "Inside  
Science Fiction" informative, educa-  
tional and entertaining. *Future* has im-  
proved tremendously since its first is-  
sue. Best wishes and thanks for hear-  
ing me out.

49 West 85 St—New York 24, N. Y.

This ends the great hypnotism debate,  
so far as *Future* is concerned. If any of  
you want to fight it out personally, I'll  
gladly consider a report from the sur-  
vivor.

## TRIBULATION FOR ASIMOV

by Paul Mittlebuscher

Dear Bob:

Best thing in the Sept. *Future* was  
your reply to Isaac Asimov. Sire, thou  
art quite a wit—did you know? Poor  
[Turn To Page 92]



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## FUTURE Science Fiction

old Asemovh...er, Ascsmov...er... Asimov (No Isaac...they give you the chair for doing what you're thinking) Actually I know how to spell your name...it's ASIMOV—

Say, Robert, do you remember several years back when the good Isaac was having the same difficulty with readers of *Planet*? It seemed that each had a different version as to the proper spelling of "Asimov". Ah yes, the by-gone days of my youth. Who were the "big" names among letter-writers in your fan-days Bob? I remember that, when I first began reading stf (long, long before I thought of becoming that strange red-eyed, ink stained creature known as Fan), the "big names" were Chad Oliver, Marion Zimmer, Rick Sneary, etc. etc. "Zimmer" is now "Bradley" (married); Oliver is an author, and Sneary has more or less dropped out of fandom. Fandom reminds me in some ways of the major leagues...a ball-player comes up from the minors, flashes for a while and then drops into obscurity. Of course some of the "greats" hang on for a long time (As Tucker, Moskowitz and others have) still others become managers (editors) as Hamling, Palmer, and yourself have done.

Worst in the issue were the two shorts "Anyone here Seen Herbie Green" and "Ixtl Igo Son"—which definitely weren't worth printing. Harry Warner's "Freedom of the Press" wasn't much better. Young Algis Budrys took top honors with "Stand Watch in the Sky". The title caught my fancy at once; I love these "dramatic" titles. Kris Neville's "Dust Thou Art" seemed to be another of those "Oh - how - we - don't - like science - and - civilization - because - they - gave - us - advanced - weapons - which - killed - a - lot - of - people - so - let's - return - to - the - jungle - and - the - simple - life - let's - kill -

[Turn To Page 94]



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## FUTURE Science Fiction

fewer - people - at - a - time - let's use - clubs - instead - of - atomic - power".

Irv Cox did much better than usual; his novelet actually held my interest until I finished the story (This is more than his efforts generally achieve.) Charles Dye's "short" read like a condensed version of a much longer story; I particularly would have liked to read of some of King Elron Degale's experiences in the rival planetary kingdom of Melosandra. The Reynolds' piece was good; seems to me it earned third place, right below Budrys and Cox's fictional contributions. Then comes Neville, followed by Dye and Warner in that order. A vague feeling that I was reading a chapter of Indian relations with early White settlers kept me from enjoying the Neville yarn. Actually, that's what it brought to mind; the "Alien" was so like a pioneer, and the "Earthmen" like Indians—even to their customs of burial Mounds, and the slaying of a warrior's dog after his death.

I'm afraid the cover illustration did not illustrate a scene from "Stand Watch in the Sky" as you indicated on the contents page. As I remember Budrys had only one humanoid character in the story:—the girl of course, the Super-slan came later. How then can we have all the humanoid creatures encircling the Earth? One even has a portable radio with him. Well, well...and just where did Algis mention that?

Ah' yes, letters. (1) Murray King (2) Leo Louis Martello (3) Carol McKinney...and how about increasing the length of this department?

—Sweet Springs, Missouri

I'll let A. J. Budrys defend his story in reference to your cover-complaint. So far as increasing the length of the letter-section goes—numerous readers feel it is too long for the length of the magazine. Of course, I could cut down my own comments to a minimum...

## DOWN TO EARTH

### GENIUSES ALL

by Frederick B. Christoff

#### Greetings and Hallucinations:

Izzat or izzat not a cover. I like it! I spent about fifteen minutes trying to figure it out, finally gave up and read the story—which pleased me no end, so I placed it first naturally. That cover again, hmmm. I take it that Luros did it after reading the story? If not, then Budrys is a genius like me. Hmmm. Anyway, I like that cover and the story it illustrated—but before you start wondering if that's all I am going to talk about I'll get onto other matters.

That article by de Camp annoyed me. He started off with one subject and branched into about twenty. My impression was that he padded the darn thing, because there was not enough information or reference on Corte-Real to make an interesting article. This is skullfullgry sir! Please, in fact pretty please you old bat! Let's have more articles on stf. Like the one coming up next month. Articles on stf is what we want, and like a good editor you will give them to us. Oh happy day!

Say, old boy, I do not know if my suggestion had anything to do with it—but I have noticed that you have cut down on the number of those blurb illos, until—in this issue—we have only ten. The magazine looks much neater and I'll betcha a buck that you haven't received any complaints.

"Dust Thou Art" must have proven very interesting to those that got the point. I didn't; so would some kind soul have pity on me and explain what it was all about?

Since you printed my letter wherein I doubted the existance of twenty-four stf magazines I have, so far, received five lists of stf magazines from some very kind people who took the

[Turn Page]

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## FUTURE Science Fiction

time and trouble to inform me. The number on these lists varies from twenty to twenty-three.

However, in reading that letter again, it is very plain to see that I forgot to explain myself; thus several of the titles mentioned on these lists are Fantasy magazines, and ones which print both Stf and Fantasy—which fact is plainly stated on the cover. If you were to classify the titles, you could not include such magazines as Stories of Stf and Fantasy, *Imagination*, etc., in the science fiction category, as they obviously would not fit. Actually there are (at the present moment) some thirty titles on the market, not counting British magazines. However, of these thirty, there are only nineteen which could be classified as science-fiction in the manner which you present it. That is pure Stf. Science fiction, no fantasy. So much for that!

Best letters go to 1. Maril Shrewsbury 2. Robert Coulson 3. Murry King.

In closing I would like to say (if this thing gets printed) that I am forming a Canadian Science Fiction Correspondence Club. This club is for Canadian fans only, not because I have anything against others but because this is one of several projects to be undertaken in an effort to create an interest here in Canadian Fandom. I would appreciate hearing from any who are interested.

—39 Cameron St. S., Kitchener, Ontario

Well...I don't use very much fantasy, but you've seen some such stories here, and you may see others, now and then.... "Stand Watch in the Sky" was written around the September cover.



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# THE RECKONING

## A Report on Your Votes and Comments

Mack Reynolds and Charles Dye were the two authors who pleased everyone this time, although Irving Cox's novelet took an easy first place. Those whose votes showed detestation of the Neville novelet were balanced by others who voted it in first place.

Sorry that the letter-section had to be so short, this time, but space was curtailed due to the length of the Moore novella. Winners this time in the letter-poll were Murray King, Isaac Asimov, and Carol McKinney. Since, as I explained in the January *Dynamic*, a lot of originals I'd intended to save were accidentally turned over to the Philcon, I'll just have to pick out something myself to send the winners. Well, they'll receive them earlier this way, at least.

Here's how the September issue stacked up:

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(Winterbotham) .....
- TO CIVILIZE (Budrys) .....
- HIGH SIGN (Dryfoos) .....
- THE PENULTIMATE WEAPON (Thomas) ..

Shall we continue to award originals to the letter-writers? No..... Yes.....

Whose were the three best letters this time? 1 .....

2 ..... 3 .....

General Comment .....



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Storling X-Ray View

You stomach sufferers can now throw away—all those dangerous drugs and worthless remedies you have tried with little or no success. Study the revealing X-Ray picture above. See why Magay gives you **DOUBLE-ACTION** tablets to work in those entire 32 feet of your digestive tract, to bring really fast, thorough relief. Nothing like them! Contain a special combination of 9 medically proven ingredients. Fast-acting. Safe. Gentle. Easy to take. No dope or harsh drugs. Anticonstipating!

Now read the actual letters of grateful users, once sufferers like yourself. Check our offer and guarantee. Then try Magay for 5 full days. You must get results or we guarantee Double Your Money Back. You can't lose. Fill out and mail valuable coupon.

**DOUBLE-ACTION FORMULA GUARANTEES  
YOU DOUBLE MONEY BACK UNLESS YOU  
GET SENSATIONAL DOUBLE BENEFITS!!**

*You get rid  
of even Old  
Gas Bloat*

*You Eat What  
You Like and  
Like What  
You Eat*

*Success or  
Double Your  
Money-Back  
Guaranteed*

Do you feel so bloated, stuffed, puffed out, you must loosen clothing just to breathe? Stomach stretched, swollen, blown up like a balloon from awful gas? In misery with heartburn, belching, gas-pains, headaches, sour stomach, bad breath? Feel nervous, grouchy; lack appetite; sleep badly? Now you can rid yourself of these warnings of danger, due to gastric hyperacidity, to need for stimulated natural gastro-intestinal juices and carminative action.

Your physician will tell you to rid both your stomach and intestines of bloat and gas, you must use a **DOUBLE ACTION** remedy: one for your stomach, and one for your bowel. Not just one kind of tablet, powder or liquid. That is why new Magay Gold & White Tablets give you real results. You take a Gold Tablet **BEFORE MEALS**—a White Tablet **AFTER MEALS**—and brother, you're on easy street. You say good-bye to gas, bloat and other non-organic symptoms.

Settle your stomach worry right now! Our square-deal no-risk offer says: "Neighbor, we know how you suffer—how disappointed you are with all those useless remedies that have failed you." You need seed no money, just write your name on the coupon. Magay double-action tablets must do everything stated on this page, to your satisfaction, or return the unused portion and get not only the price you pay, but **DOUBLE YOUR MONEY BACK!** You know we couldn't make such an offer unless Magay is all we say—so order with confidence today. Big 150 tablet supply only \$3.00. **FREE** discount coupon saves you 50c on first order. That makes it less than 2c per tablet for all these benefits. Don't delay relief. Mail no-risk coupon now. **YOU HAVE NOTHING TO LOSE BUT A BELLY FULL OF GAS!**

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### LETTERS PROVE RESULTS

"Took Magay pills for 4 days. Got relief from stomach trouble, embarrassing gas 1 had 5 years." **K.R.**

"I suffered extreme discomfort during the day and spent countless sleepless nights due to gas and stomach upsetment. Nothing relieved this feeling until I tried Magay. Now I never suffer any more." **N.C.D.**

"Results are almost miraculous. For first time in months I can enjoy a meal without fear of suffering distress afterwards." **A.B.**

"Kept getting less and less dates. Didn't know why friends started avoiding me. Then I tried Gold & White tablets. Now getting back into circulation." **L.B.**

## FREE COUPON worth 50¢

on first purchase Magay Gold & White Tablets

Magay Corporation, Box 74, Bayside 60, N. Y.

Rush big 150 tablet supply of Magay Gold & White Tablets in plain wrapper. I must be delighted with results or you Guarantee Double My Money Back on return of unused portion within 5 days.

☐ \$2.50 enclosed

☐ Send postpaid.

☐ Send C.O.D.

☐ plus charges.

Regular price \$3.00

50c less coupon .50

**YOU PAY ONLY \$2.50**

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